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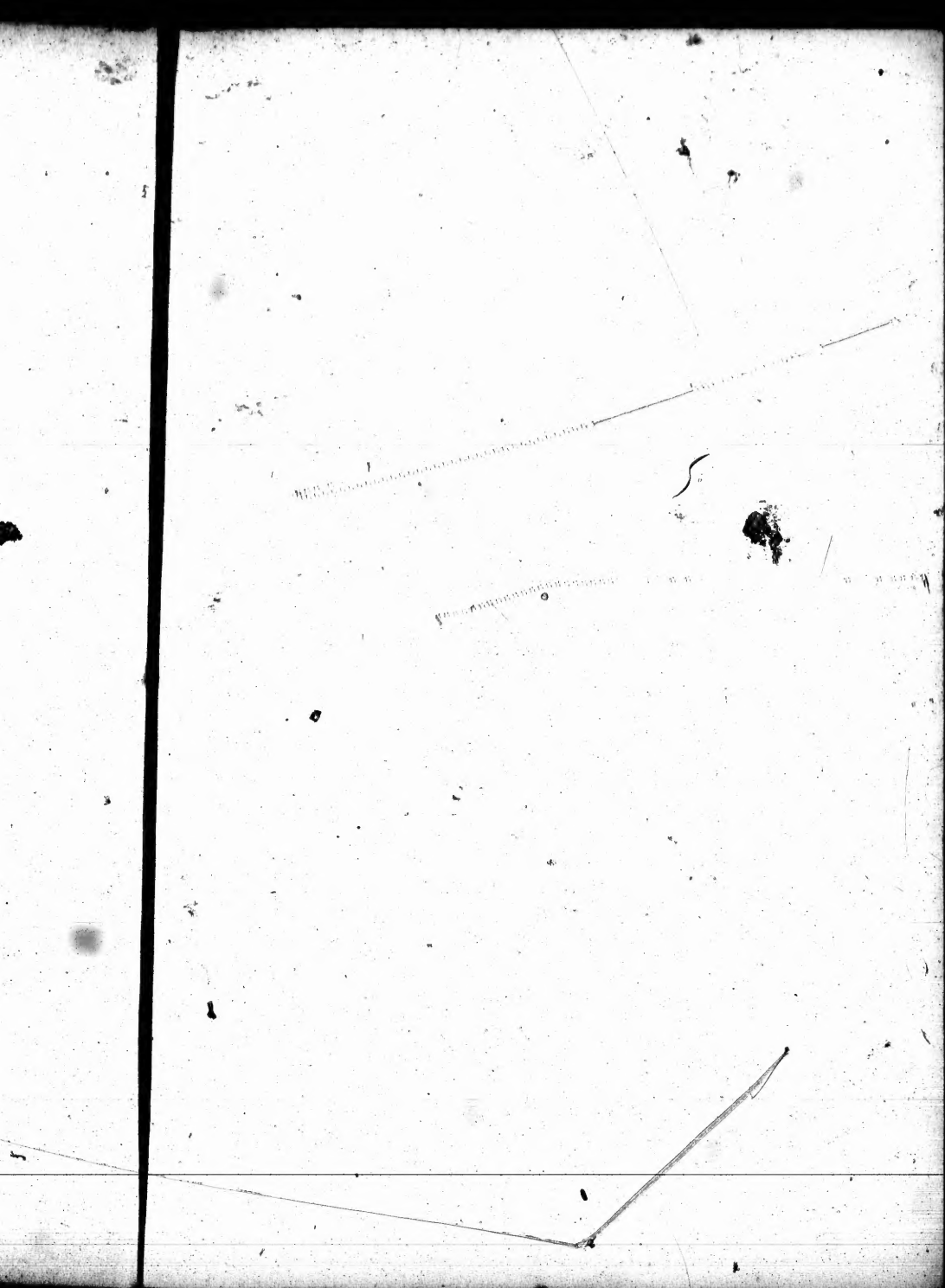
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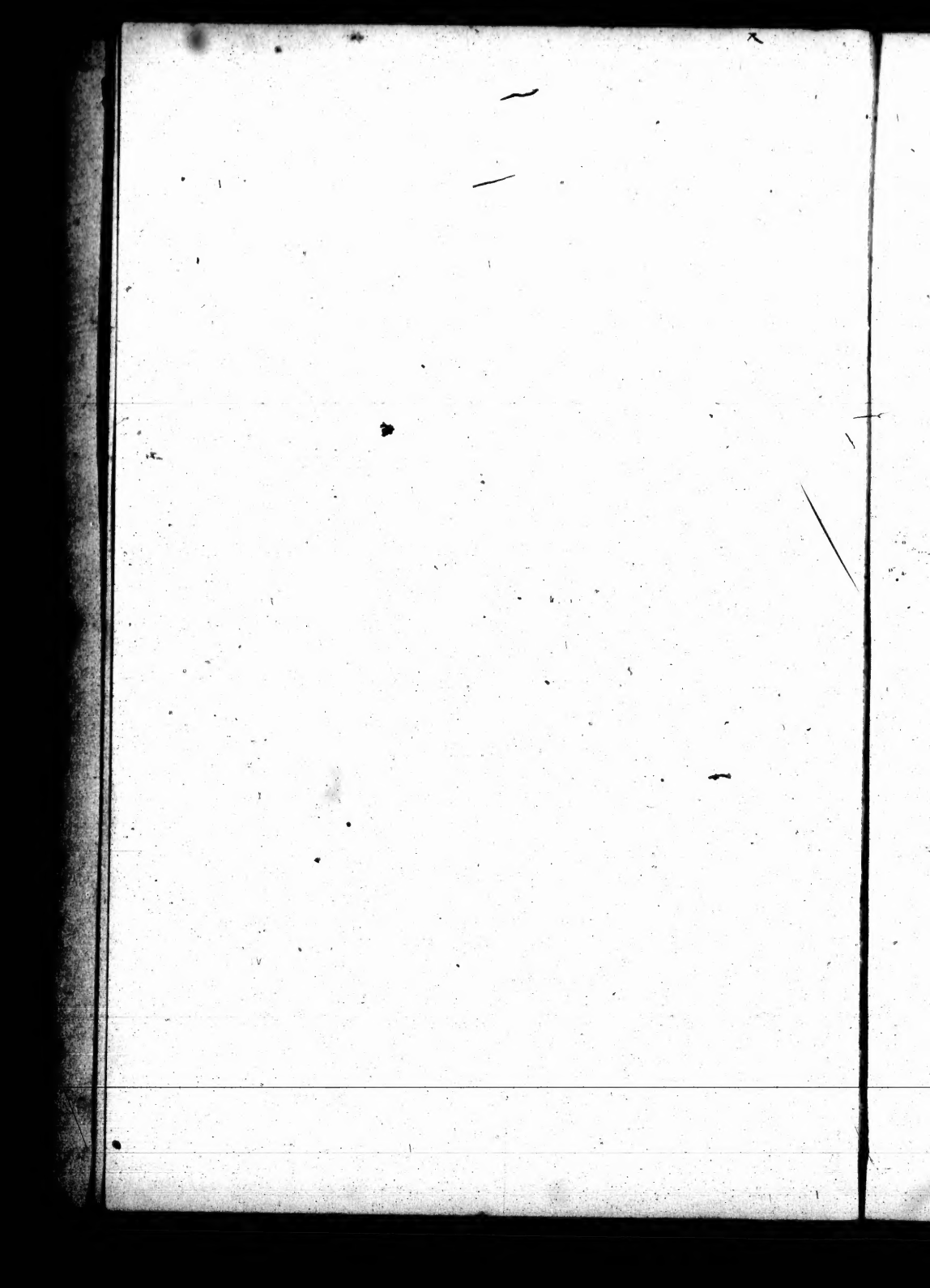
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BIBLICAL DIFFICULTIES DISPELLED:

BEING AN ANSWER TO QUERIES RESPECTING SO-CALLED

DISCREPANCIES IN SCRIPTURE;

MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED TEXTS,
ETC., ETC.



BY

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"Theistic Problems;" "Light in the Cloud," Etc.

"Of all the arts loquacious dupes invent,
To cheat themselves and gain the world's assent,
The worst is Scripture warped from its intent."—*Cotter.*

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PREFACE.

DURING the nine years that I have been engaged almost exclusively in the field of "Christian Apologetics," many hundreds of questions have been propounded to me on the difficulties to be met with in relation to religion and the sacred scriptures. Some of these have been put orally at the close of lectures, others have cropped up in public debates that I have held with leading sceptical advocates; and others—by far the major portion—have been sent through the post. All have been replied to in one way or another, the last named mainly in writing. The questioners have been of various classes; some of them anxious enquirers, troubled with doubts that may have arisen in their own minds, or, pestered with difficulties brought before them by their companions or fellow-workmen, whose queries were put in a respectful tone and a reverential frame of mind, for the purpose of obtaining information; and others, persons who were insolent and defiant in their questionings, seemingly caring for nothing but to air their crotchets and perplex the respondent. All the following answers have appeared in the *Shield of Faith*. I have preserved the phraseology of the questioners in each case, omitting the

name, which was, however, generally a pseudonym. A great number of other replies to similar questions I have by me, which I may hereafter publish in a new series. That my explanations have already cleared away doubts from many minds I know, and I can only hope that, by the blessing of God, the wider circulation that the replies will now obtain may result in increased good.

The volume was quite ready for the press before I left England in August last; but a combination of circumstances prevented me from getting it out at that time, and I consequently concluded to defer its publication until my return. In this country, however, I found something of the kind as much needed as in England, and many friends with whom I conversed on the subject expressed a wish that I would bring out the volume here. I could hardly refuse this request, as all my other books have been most favourably received on this side of the Atlantic, both by the press and the public, and are still commanding a large circulation.

GEORGE SEXTON.

TORONTO, CANADA, Dec. 1st, 1884.

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Resur-

" OH, Book of books ! though scepticism flout
Thy sacred origin, thy worth decry ;
Though atheistic folly give the lie
To what thou teachest ; though the critic doubt
This fact, that miracle, and raise a shout
Of triumph o'er each incongruity
He in thy pages may perchance espy ;
As in his strength the effulgent sun shines out,
Hiding innumerable stars, so dost thou shine
With heavenly light, all human works excelling ;
Thy oracles are holy and divine,
Of free salvation through a Saviour telling ;
All truth,—all excellence dost thou enshrine
The mists of ignorance and sin dispelling."

W. LLOYD GARRISON.

" God reveals himself in his word, as he does in his works. In both we see a self-revealing, self-concealing God, who makes himself known only to those who earnestly seek him ; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief ; in both we find contradictions, whose higher harmony is hidden, except from him who gives up his whole mind in reverence ; in both, in the word, it is a law of revelation that the heart of man should be tested in receiving it ; and that in the spiritual life, as well as in the bodily, man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow."—*Neander*.

" Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer ; and when this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written on the subject."
Bishop Horne.

Biblical Difficulties Dispelled.

TAKING NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW.

Question 1.—How can we carry on the Secular business of life, if we act upon the rule given in Matthew vi. 34, to take no thought for the morrow? * * *

Answer.—The text should be rendered, "Be not anxious, or solicitous," which is the true meaning of the Greek word *μεριμνάω*. "Be not unduly anxious for your life," etc. Be not over-solicitous about to-morrow. This advice we should all of us be the better for acting upon. Such teaching is especially necessary to-day, when corroding cares are allowed to eat into the very heart's core of society, and to destroy at one blow, in hundreds of cases, both the body and the mind.

LIMITS OF CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE.

Question 2.—How can the Deity of Christ be reconciled with the text in Matthew xxiv. 26, which speaks of His knowledge being limited? * * *

Answer.—The passage in question is, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." No one who reads the New Testament carefully can fail to see that our Lord sometimes speaks in His human nature, and at other times His language rises up from the infinite depths of His Godhead. We read of Him that He "increased in wisdom and stature," in which case His human nature alone is referred to; and we are also informed that He was the Logos who was from eternity with God—that

He is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which ~~is~~, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." In the text under consideration, He speaks not simply in His human nature, but in His condition of humiliation. Nor do Christians in general see any incongruity in this. Ewald—no mean authority—remarks, "Even the highest divine power, when it veils itself in mortal body, and appears in definite time, finds in this body and this time its limits" (Life of Christ, p. 340). And even Bishop Colenso, an author whom sceptics ought to respect, says, "It is perfectly consistent with the most entire and sincere belief in our Lord's divinity to hold, as many do, that when He vouchsafed to become a Son of Man, He took our nature fully, and voluntarily entered into all the conditions of humanity, and amongst others, into that which makes our growth in all ordinary knowledge gradual and limited." Light-foot says, in reference to this passage, "He did not know so that He might at that time declare to the disciples." And this is probably the true meaning.

TWO ACCOUNTS OF PAUL'S CONVERSION.

Question 3.—There are two accounts of Paul's conversion in the New Testament, one in Acts ix., where it states that the men who were with him heard a voice, and the other in chapter xxii. of the same book, where it is distinctly stated that these persons saw the light "but heard not the voice." How can these be reconciled? * * *

Answer.—This does appear to be a discrepancy to the mere English reader. But every student of the Greek New Testament knows that the Apostle used the verb *akouo*, to hear, in the same sense in this verse as its corresponding Hebrew verb is often employed in the Old Testament, viz., to understand. We have a good illustration of this meaning in I. Cor., xiv. 2, "For no man understandeth (*akouet*) him." The Apostle, therefore, says, not that his companions did not *hear* the voice, but that they did not *know* what was said. These men were probably Hellenists, and did not understand Aramaic, in which dialect the Lord spoke to Paul.

HOW DID GOD COME FROM TEMAN?

Question 4.—What is the meaning of the passage which says "God came from Teman," Hab. iii. 3? * * *

Answer.—The text refers unquestionably to the marvellous displays of Divine glory, witnessed in connection with the giving of the law. So it is explained by Abarbanel, Aben Ezra, Eichhorn, Ewald, Henderson, Lowth, Michaelis, and others, showing a uniformity of interpretation amongst Jews, Christians, and Rationalists. Teman and Paran were "regions to the south of Palestine generally," and therefore "the theatre of the divine manifestation to Israel." There is a parallel text in Deut. xxxiii. 2, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shineth forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them." Paran is the desert region, extending from the south of Judah to Sinai, and Teman is so identified with Seir as to be substituted for it by Habakkuk. The prophet is appealing to God's glorious manifestations to His people, as the ground for praying that He will revive His work.

IS THE SONG OF SOLOMON AN IMPURE BOOK?

Question 5.—Is not the "Song of Solomon" an impure book, and therefore out of place in the Bible? * * *

Answer.—There is nothing whatever impure in the "Song of Solomon," and the persons who say there is are either destitute of scholarship or possessed of that morbid kind of imagination which sees impurity lurking everywhere, or perchance both. Read the admirable translation of Dr. Ginsburg, or those of Zöckler and Withington, and you will be struck with the marvellous beauty of the language of this book.

It must be borne in mind that Orientalists possess much greater freedom both of speech and manners than ourselves. Their style of thought is impassioned, warm, and voluptuous, and they have a much greater license of expression than would be tolerated in Western lands. What we should simply indicate by circumlocution and euphemism, they would express by direct language. This fact alone will serve to explain many of the

so-called indelicate expressions to be found in the Bible. Professor Stuart, one of the most able Hebrew scholars of his day, remarks, in reference to this very book, "It is clear that no indecency is intended, and equally clear, as it seems to me, that no improper feelings were excited by the language in question in the minds of those who were originally addressed." He also draws attention to the fact—a very important one—that in the East women were excluded from the society of men, and, as a consequence, greater freedom of speech was allowed than in lands where the sexes mix freely together. In addition to this, it must be remembered that the style of dress worn was altogether different from ours, and certain parts of the body were exposed which we keep covered. The Rev. W. M. Thompson observes, "While the face is veiled, the bosom is exposed in a way not at all in accordance with our ideas of propriety." To an Oriental there would be no more indelicacy in praising the breasts of a female than with us in eulogising the hair or the eyes.

Our translation of the Canticles, too, might be improved ; but compare it with any other book written at the same time, and its purity is something marvellous. Shakespeare presents a wonderful contrast to all other writers of his time for the purity and delicacy of his language, and yet he falls in this respect infinitely below the English translation of the Scriptures. Isaac Taylor says of the Song of Solomon, "If a half dozen heedlessly rendered passages of our English versions were amended, as easily they might be, then the Canticles would consist throughout of the purest utterances of conjugal affection." And Professor W. H. Green remarks, "There is not the slightest taint of impurity or immodesty to be found in any portion of this elegant lyric." Infidels have, as is their custom, dealt very unfairly with this beautiful production. And yet, considering the class of books they have often issued and defended, one would hardly expect them to be fastidious over such matters as indelicacy of expression.

INABILITY TO REPENT.

Question 6.—What are we to understand by the passage which states that Esau was unable to repent, though he desired to do so, "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears?" (Heb. xii. 17). * * *

Answer.—The passage unquestionably refers to the impossibility of reversing what had been done. So it is explained by Alford, Delitzsch, Bleek, De Wette, and others. And in this respect Esau's fate is just that of every man. No one of us can avert the results that may flow from our deeds, however much we may weep over them and lament them. Esau may change, so may any man, but that will not undo the past. There are certain penalties, which, in the very nature of things, attach to particular acts, and these cannot be removed. That Esau might repent of his sin and find pardon of God is very possible, but his birthright is irretrievably forfeited, and the blessing pronounced upon Jacob irrecallable. A man may destroy his health by dissipation and debauchery, and afterwards repent and be forgiven by God, but that will not restore his broken constitution. Thousands of instances occur in which men find no place for repentance, however much their tears may flow and their cries rend the air.

IRRESPONSIBILITY FOR OPINIONS.

Question 7.—How can a man be responsible for his opinions seeing that he can only believe according to evidence? * * *

Answer.—Supposing it to be true that a man can only believe according to evidence, he may yet be guilty of neglecting to obtain evidence. A determination not to investigate is a voluntary act, and that very determination may lead to a rejection of the truth. There is much nonsense talked and written on the irresponsibility of men for their opinions. The perception of truth is often a moral act. Says Fichte, "Men do not will according to their reason, but reason according to their will." "Men often decide," says Paley, "under the power and influence of sinful temptation; but having decided, the decision is afterwards remembered by them, and grows into a settled and habitual

opinion, as much as if they had proceeded in it without any bias or prejudice whatever." Many beliefs depend largely upon volition, and are therefore criminal. Aristotle has well said: "And moreover they punish those who act in ignorance of any particular enactment of the laws which ought to be known, and which it is not difficult to learn; and, indeed, in all cases of ignorance whatsoever, where the ignorance appears to be the result of negligence; since it was in the man's power to avoid such ignorance, in that he was perfectly able to give the matter all due attention." (Ethics iii., v. 9. Williams' Translation.)

FALLING OF A JUST MAN.

Question 8.—In your answer to queries I should feel obliged if you would give a few words of explanation on the 16th verse of the 24th chapter of Proverbs. Please explain how a just man can fall so frequently and yet be considered a just man. * *

Answer.—This passage has no reference to falling into sin. The Hebrew word נָפַל (*nah-phal*), which is here rendered *fall-eth*, is never used for "sinneth," but simply for falling into trials. The meaning of the passage is, therefore, obvious enough; the righteous man may fall into calamities seven (i.e., ever so many) times, but by the help of God he riseth up again, whilst the wicked will fall and be overthrown in even one calamity. The wicked man is consequently advised not to plot against the righteous, nor to rejoice when troubles overwhelm him, for they will only be for a time, and in the end he will come forth triumphant. Dr. David Thomas, in his most excellent work, "The Practical Philosopher," thus comments on the passage: "The wicked cannot ruin the good. For a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again. Calamity, and not immorality, is referred to here, and wicked men may cause a just man to fall into difficulties and troubles. Through their malignant endeavours they may darken his reputation, mar the harmony of his social circle, thwart his secular plans, and reduce him to bankruptcy, but notwithstanding this he shall 'rise again.' There is a marvellous buoyancy in goodness. If the just man who has fallen into calamity rises not to his former secular position, he rises in spirit above his trials.

His religion, like a lifeboat, bears him over the billows and out-rides the storm. Besides this elasticity, which is in goodness itself, God's providential hand will be outstretched to raise the fallen man. A just man is near to the heart of God: 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye,' 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,' 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven shall no evil touch thee,' 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.' He that is engaged, therefore, in endeavouring to injure the good, is engaged in a fruitless work. The just man is destined to rise; no sea of persecution is deep enough to drown him; he will rise and, like his Master, 'walk upon the billows.'"

DO MEN'S THOUGHTS PERISH AT DEATH?

Question 9.—I read in Psalms cxlvi. 4, that when man returneth to earth—i.e., I presume dies, "in that very day his thoughts perish." If this be so, how can he be said to live in another world, where his thoughts must necessarily be active?

Answer.—According to literalistic principles, this would imply that there was no immortality, conditional or unconditional. Yet scores of passages could be quoted to show that David believed in a future life, and looked forward cheerfully to the time when he should enter upon its inheritance. (*Vide* Dr. Sexton's "Doctrine of Immortality as taught in the Old Testament.") The word rendered *thoughts* refer unquestionably to plans, projects, schemes, etc. In Isaiah lv. 7, the word is used in a similar sense, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts," that is, not stop thinking, but cease from his evil designs. At death the wicked man's plans and purposes will come to nought, literally perish. Says Hengstenberg, "The thoughts which go to the grave with the dying man are his vain projects." In the case of the rich man mentioned in the Gospel, his "thoughts" of worldly prosperity, his schemes for building larger barns in which to store his goods, his anticipated years of luxury and ease, and his contemplated future comfort "perished" in the same night. Not that the man himself ceased to be, for his soul was demanded by the

avenging angels. "Thy soul shall be required of thee," or, as Archbishop Trench renders it, "This night they require thy soul of thee."

IS OATH TAKING WRONG?

Question 10.—I am much perplexed on the question of oaths. Ought a Christian on any occasion to swear in a court of justice with the plain teaching of Christ before him, as recorded in Matt. v. 33-37? Are not the Quakers right in the course they take in these matters? * * *

Answer.—It is clear that our Lord did not refer to judicial swearing; since He allowed Himself to be put under oath, and thus recognized the validity of the act when the High Priest said to Him, "I adjure thee, (that is, cause thee to swear) by the living God." Jesus submitted to be thus sworn, and hence responded to the solemn obligation. Great numbers of instances are recorded in the Scriptures in which good men, angels, and even God Himself employed the oath for confirmation.

It must be borne in mind that at the time when our Lord was on earth the Jews were terribly in the habit of using vain and frivolous oaths in their ordinary conversation. They swore by the temple, by the sun, by the earth, by the head, and by almost anything they could think of except the name of God. These oaths they did not consider particularly binding. Maimonides says: "If anyone swears by heaven, by the earth, by the sun, and so forth, although it is the intention of him who swears in these words to swear by Him who created these things, yet this is not an oath; or, if one swears by one of the prophets, or by one of the books of Scripture, although it be the purpose of the swearer to swear by Him who sent that prophet or who gave that book, nevertheless, this is not an oath."

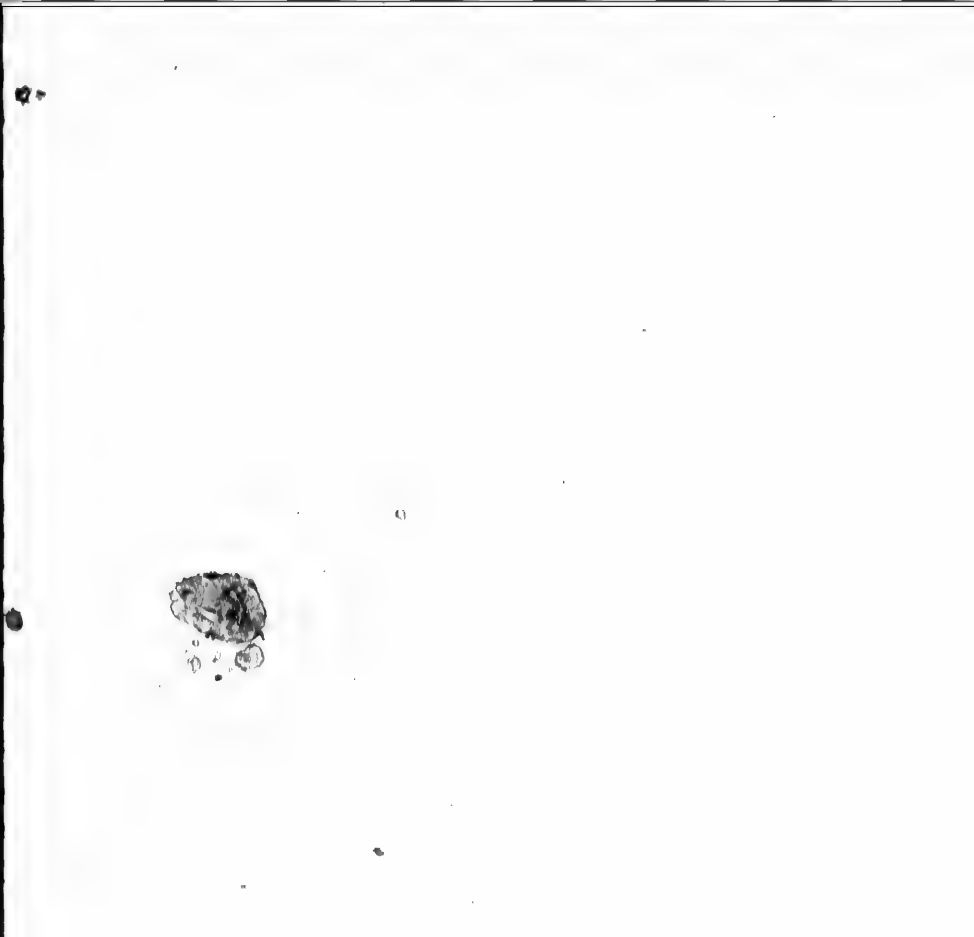
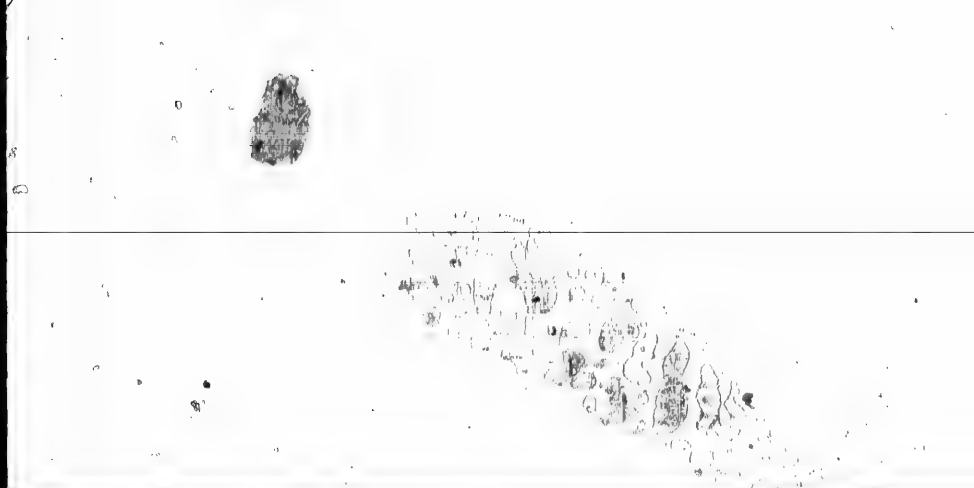
The sophistry of this kind of swearing and the gross abuse of it will be at once apparent. Michaelis says that such oaths were "at one time so common and so frequently and basely abused as to have become perfectly disgraceful to the Jews, even in the eyes of the less treacherous heathen around them, and justly distinguished by the name Jewish oaths." It was against this trivial swearing that our Lord warned His disciples, "Let your

speech or conversation be yea and nay," that is, do not attempt to bolster up your statements by frivolous oaths that are meaningless. It is to be observed that swearing by the name of God is not mentioned in the prohibition, for that would have been judicial and consequently binding; only trivial and foolish swearing is therefore forbidden.

THE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS THAT THE BODY OF JESUS WAS IN THE GRAVE.

Question 11.—How can it be shown that the body of Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave? * * *

Answer.—The expression used in reference to this event, in Matt. xii. 40, is what is termed a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which the whole of a thing is put for a part, or a part for the whole. With the Jews it was common to count fractional years for whole ones. Lightfoot says, that according to the Rabbins, "the very first day of a year may stand in computation for the whole year." Aben Ezra referring to Leviticus xii. 3, remarks that, "If an infant was born in the last hour of the day, such hour was counted a whole day." Such method of computing time always prevailed amongst orientals, and does so still. "Thus the year ending on a certain day, any part of the foregoing year is reckoned a whole year. A child born in the last week of our December would be reckoned a year old on the first day of January, because born in the old year." Dr. Robinson tells that in his own experience he found "that five days" of quarantine really meant "only three whole days and portions of two others." In several passages of Scripture this method of computing time will be seen. *Vide* 1 Samuel xxi. 12, 13. In Hebrew the words day and night are sometimes not separated as with us, so as to describe two distinct periods of time; one word is employed which includes both. Thus in Gen. i. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, the evening and the morning are said to comprise the *geb'-rev*. or day. In Gen. vii. 17, the term "forty days" is used for forty days and nights. A very good illustration of the sense in which the expression three days and three nights is used in Scripture, will be found in the book of Esther. It is there re-



corded that the Queen and the Jews fasted "three days and three nights" (Esther iv. 16). Yet we learn that the day on which the command was given is included, and the third day of the fast is the day of the banquet (v. 4). Thus the "three days and three nights" comprised but one whole day, a part of two other days, and two nights. The prediction representing the time that the body of Jesus was to remain in the tomb, was therefore not seventy-two hours, but some portions of three separate days. And this was fulfilled.

NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO VISITED THE TOMB ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD.

Question 12.—How are the accounts in the four gospels respecting the number of women who visited the tomb on the occasion of Christ's resurrection to be reconciled? Mark names three; Matthew names two; John names one; and Luke names several. * * *

Answer.—No one of the Evangelists state that no more women were present than those whom he names. John, for example, does not say that only Mary Magdalene was present, in point of fact his words imply the contrary, for he represents her as saying, "We know not where they have laid Him." Each writer singles out one or more of the persons whom he mentions, more particularly, for some reason, but his words in no way preclude the possibility of others being present. Then there can be no doubt that different points of time are referred to by the four writers, each one specifying the number of women present at the time to which he refers. "There were two distinct parties of women—the Mary's and their friends, and the Galilean women—who followed our Lord. Probably the women having lodged among their friends, in different parts of the city, and to avoid suspicion on the part of the Jews, would come by different paths to the sepulchre, and would not arrive at the same moment. We may therefore suppose that Mary Magdalene arrived first (so John); soon the other Mary arrives (so Matthew); then Salome comes (so Mark); finally the "other women" make their appearance (so Luke)."—Haley.

MEN AND WOMEN BEFORE ADAM AND EVE.

Question 13.—Does not the 24th verse of 2nd chapter of Genesis imply that there were men and women before Adam and Eve?

* * *

Answer.—Assuredly not. The meaning of the passage appears very simple. The law of marriage and the affection which ought to exist between the husband and the wife here finds its foundation and origin. Beings were hereafter to come into the world who should marry, were in fact already in existence when the passage was written. Moses states the fact as to the origin of woman, and then draws from it a very natural and legitimate conclusion applicable in his time and for all future ages.

CHRIST'S CRY ON THE CROSS.

Question 14.—If our Lord Jesus spoke in Greek, how is it that when He cried on the cross (Matt. xivii. 46) that the people thought He cried for Elias (v. 47), yet we are told that in Greek it meant "My God, My God, &c.?" * * *

Answer.—The words which the Lord used on this occasion were quoted from the 22nd Psalm. He spoke then in *Aramaic*, the language of His childhood. This in no way proves that He did not usually in ordinary conversation speak in Greek. "The language we have heard from our mother's lips, and spoken in childhood, may be laid aside in after years for another, to meet the requirements of life; and Jesus, doubtless, in these last years, had often had to use the Greek of city communities, instead of His own simple Galilean. But now, the sounds of infancy, always nearest the heart, and sure to come to the lips in our deepest emotions, returned in His anguish, and in words which He had learned at His mother's knee, His heart uttered its last wail—

Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?

(My God! My God; why hast Thou forsaken Me?)

The first words sounded like the name of the great prophet Elijah, the expected herald of the Messiah, and were taken by some in the crowd, for a cry that he should come to save Him."

(Dr. Geike.) The probability is that the persons who interpreted the Lord's words as a cry for Elias did not understand the language in which He spoke, hence the error.

STRAINING AT A GNAT.

Question 15.—What are we to understand by the expression in Matthew xxiii. 24, "Strain at a gnat." * * *

Answer.—It might be rendered with greater precision "strain out a gnat," and it has probably a reference to a custom that prevailed at the time of straining the wine and other drinks before taking them, lest a gnat should be inadvertently swallowed. Gnats were unclean according to the Mosaic Law (*Vide* Levit. xi. 20. 23), and, therefore, to be avoided most carefully. Travellers report that the practice still prevails in the east of unfolding the end of the turban, placing it over the mouth of the *bota*, and drinking through it, so that the muslin may act as a strainer to strain out the gnats whose larvæ abound in the water. The figure employed by our Lord is therefore a very forcible one, and most easy to be understood.

JOB'S CHILDREN.

Question 16.—From Job i. 19, it would appear that all Job's sons and daughters were killed by the falling of the house in which they were feasting when the storm arose. But in chapter xix. verse 17, some of the children are referred to as though they were still alive. What is the explanation of this? * * *

Answer.—Several very eminent Biblical critics, amongst whom we may name Gesenius, Delitzsch, Stuhlman, Schlottman, Conant, and Winer, think that the Hebrew expression used in the latter verse is equivalent to "my brethren." Wetstein, comparing the Arabian idiom, says that it denotes "all my relations by blood." Certain it is that it means kinsmen of some kind, not necessarily children. Dr. Davidson thinks that "grand children" are referred to, which is quite possible. There is nothing in the text to imply that any of Job's children were left alive.

GOD RESTING AND BEING REFRESHED.

Question 17.—What is the meaning of the words, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day rested and was refreshed?" (Exod. xxxi. 17). * * *

Answer.—The terms "rested and was refreshed" do not imply physical exhaustion, but with the Hebrews simply conveys the idea of cessation from the work under consideration. It is a vivid Oriental way of saying that the work was ended, and the Lord took a delight in surveying it. The Douay Bible renders it very correctly as follows, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth; and in the seventh day He ceased from His work," i.e., ceased because the work was finished. Dr. J. P. Thompson remarks on this text: "To 'rest' here does not mean to seek repose from fatigue, but to suspend activity in a particular mode of operation, to cease from doing thus and so." Maimonides says that the word used in the parallel text (Exod. xx. 11) properly means, "ceased." And the Septuagint agrees with this explanation. Murphy observes, "'Refreshed' includes at all events the pure delight arising from the consciousness of a design accomplished, and from the contemplation of the intrinsic excellence of the work." This is the true meaning, for "The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isaiah xl. 28).

TURNING THE WATERS OF EGYPT INTO BLOOD.

Question 18.—When Aaron turned all the waters of Egypt into blood we read that the magicians did likewise, how do you explain this? (Exod. vii). * * *

Answer.—It is very probable that the word "all" used in the nineteenth and twentieth verses does not mean the whole of the water in the land, for, as Hengstenberg has pointed out, *universal terms* are used throughout the narrative. Such an idiom is a very common one in all languages. Kurtz thinks that only the Nile water was changed, that in the wells being unaffected, and this is very likely, for if the whole of the water had been changed the nation must have perished. Besides, it would seem as Mr. Alexander has suggested, that the "water when

filtered through the earth on the bank of the river, was restored to its salubrity." Hence the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink (v. 24). Some water was therefore left upon which the magicians could operate.

GOD NOT ALL POWERFUL.

Question 19.—What is the explanation of the passage, "And the Lord was with Judah and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron" (Judges i. 19). * * *

Answer.—Voltaire was, we think, the first to put the unnatural construction on this passage that it was the Lord who could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley. Modern infidels have of course repeated it *ad nauseam*. But the fact is, that the pronoun *he* refers to the nearest antecedent *Judah*. It was, therefore, Judah—not the Lord—who could not drive the inhabitants out of the valley because of their iron chariots. The Douay Bible translates the passage, "And the Lord was with Judah and he (i.e. Judah) possessed the hill country, but was not able to destroy the inhabitants of the valley, because they had many chariots armed with scythes." Of course this implies a limitation of the help that the Lord gave to Judah, but that is a matter with which we can have no concern. God doubtless did in that case, as in all others, bestow as much prosperity or success as is good for the recipients.

TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

Question 20.—How do you reconcile the two accounts of the ascension of Christ? Luke xxiv., Acts i. 9. 12. * * *

Answer.—This is one of the so-called discrepancies to be found in a book entitled "One Hundred and Forty-four Self-contradictions of the Bible," and it may be taken as a specimen of the rest. Certainly it displays gross ignorance on the part of the author. It must be remembered that, as Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles, the two statements were made by the same author, and so very painstaking and careful a writer as Luke was not likely to contradict himself. The fact is, the

village of Bethany was built on the south-east side of the Mount of Olives. Both accounts are, consequently, correct. "Persons," says Haley, "returning from Bethany to Jerusalem would pass over the top of Olivet, and hence might be said to return from this mount."

TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE DEATH OF JUDAS.

Question 21.—There are two accounts of the death of Judas (Matt. xxvii. 5, Acts i. 18), how are these to be reconciled? * *

Answer.—These accounts are not contradictory, for one does not exclude the other. Both are quite compatible. "Judas suspended himself from a tree on the brink of the precipice overhanging the valley of Hinnon," and at some time or other—it may have been after he had been hanging for some time and decomposition had set in—the rope or the branch of the tree gave way and his body fell, striking upon some point in the rock and his bowels gushed out. Professor Hackett not long since visited the supposed scene of this event, and declared after doing so that such an explanation was "entirely natural." Haley says "as he stood in the valley, and looked up to the rocky terraces which hang over it, and which he found by measurement to vary from twenty-five to forty feet almost perpendicular height, he felt more than ever satisfied with the solution just given. He speaks of trees as still growing upon the margin of these precipices, and of a rocky pavement at the bottom of the ledges, upon which the traitor would be crushed and mangled, as well as killed, in the fall." One aspect of the affair is given by Matthew, and another by Peter, but there is perfect harmony between them.

JACOB'S FRAUD ON ESAU.

Question 22.—Will you tell me how it was that in Genesis xxv. 23, the Lord said that Esau should serve Jacob, when we find in chapter xxvi. that Jacob has to tell a lie to receive the blessing? * * *

Answer.—The two things named here are perfectly distinct. The "blessing" was obtained by fraud and deception,

and these were then—and have ever remained—sins hateful to God, and injurious to men. For pursuing the line of conduct described, Jacob was unquestionably greatly to be blamed. But the prediction as to the servitude is quite another matter, and refers not to Jacob and Esau personally, but to their descendants. The very text quoted shows this, "Two nations are in thy womb, two manner of peoples shall be separated from thee, and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger," i.e., the elder people, or the descendants of the elder child, shall serve the descendants of the younger child. Nothing can be clearer than this. Esau never did serve Jacob personally. He surrendered his birthright to him, but he was never his servant. It was upon the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, that the judgments of God fell. (*Vide* Malachi i. 2, 3.)

CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AT THE SAME TIME.

Question 23.—Will you kindly explain the 13th verse of the 3rd chapter of St. John? How are we to understand Christ when He positively asserts His being in Heaven whilst He is conversing with Nicodemus on the earth?

Answer.—There is no difficulty whatever about the teaching in this text. In one sense Christ came from heaven, in another He always remained in heaven. It is not a physical locality that is referred to in the latter case, but a state of perfect holiness and purity. Heaven is the state of soul that we make for ourselves; and those who follow Christ are as He was, but in a smaller degree, in heaven even whilst on earth. We do not fly away at death to some place millions of miles distant, somewhere beyond the skies, but awake to a perfect realization of the spiritual conditions and surroundings that we have formed for ourselves on earth. No man goes to heaven when he passes from earth who was not in heaven whilst on the earth. The Lord was in the fullest sense always in heaven, in fact, His presence would make any place a heaven.

BIBLE WITCHCRAFT.

Question 24.—Will you give me your opinion on the text which says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live?" This is often quoted by secularists as a proof that the Bible favours superstitions. * * *

Answer.—The Mosaic law did not decide as to the validity of the claims of those pretending to the power of witchcraft, but simply condemned to death persons who assumed to exercise it. But whether the power was real or not, clearly it was in no sense like the so-called witchcraft of a later time. The woman of Endor was very unlike the Scotch hags of the reign of James. To a great extent the witchcraft of the Bible resolves itself, as Sir Walter Scott observes, into a trafficking with idols, and asking counsel of false deities, or, in other words, into idolatry. This is the opinion of many eminent writers, amongst whom may be named Dr. Graves, Mr. Denham, and Mr. R. S. Poole. The latter gentleman has written a very able article on the subject in Dr. Smith's Biblical Dictionary (Article "Magic"). In this he endeavours to show that it is a distinctive characteristic of the teaching of the Bible, that it warrants no belief in charms and incantations, as capable of producing evil consequences when employed against any person. "In the Psalms, the most personal of all the books of Scripture, there is no prayer to be protected against magical influences. The believer prays to be delivered from every kind of evil that could hurt the body or soul, but he says nothing of the machinations of sorcerers." The modern notion of witchcraft was certainly unknown to the Hebrews. Even supposing that the power claimed by the ancient witch or wizard was real—and we are very much inclined to think it was—then it was necromancy, and this in the Jewish law was denounced as a crime. It seduced the people from their allegiance to the True God, led them into idolatry, and caused them to practice the abominations of the surrounding peoples, and was consequently punished with death. It must never be forgotten that at this time the Israelites were living under a Theocracy, and hence the severe punishments which followed a violation of the law.

EVIL SPIRIT FROM GOD.

Question 25.—Will you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage? In 1 Samuel, xviii. 10, you will find these words, "And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul." An explanation of the above would much oblige. * * *

Answer.—The article is not in the Hebrew. The true reading is therefore, "an evil spirit," not "the evil spirit." And this spirit came upon Saul as a punishment for his wicked deeds. The passage shows the Sovereignty of God in the world of spirits as well as in the material universe. Not even evil spirits can go forth without His permission, and when they do go they are often the means of bringing punishment upon evil doers. God uses evil to chastise evil. This frequently occurs in the present world where men are the agents employed, and there is therefore no reason why the Almighty should not use evil spirits for punitive purposes.

WHO WAS CAIN'S WIFE?

Question 26.—I shall be obliged by your explanation of the first part of the 17th verse of the 4th chapter of Genesis. I have heard several take those words as showing (as they say) the untruthfulness of the Bible, by saying, "Where was the wife to come from?" * * *

Answer.—The passage presents no difficulty. Adam and Eve had probably many other children besides those named in the Bible. The silence of Scripture regarding them by no means disproves the fact. Some other child of our first parents was therefore doubtless Cain's wife. There are a good many theories prevalent on the subject, but they are all speculations, and may consequently be taken for what they are worth. If it be objected that for a man to marry his sister would be to commit incest, we reply that the prohibition against such marriages had not at that time been given, and they were consequently allowable. It is strange that a sceptic should object to incest, since nature, his great authority in morals, knows of no such crime. The lower animals practice it, and it is impossible to prove it wrong save

by an appeal to Scripture. Dr. Sleight remarks: "There are two very obvious reasons why, at the *beginning*, near relations were not prohibited intermarrying:

1. No physical evil arises from it till repeated through several generations.

2. In the beginning, as it seemed fit to the Creator that the earth should be populated from one pair, it was indispensably necessary for even brothers and sisters to marry, but as generations began to increase the necessity became diminished and the physical evil increased, till it seemed good to the Almighty to give specific directions on the subject. Since that time, of course, intermarrying with near relations has been criminal."

Moreover, recent physiological researches have shown that the mere physical evils consequent upon the marriage of near relations have been enormously exaggerated.

CHRISTIANS TO PRODUCE SWORDS.

Question 27.—I shall be glad if you will tell me how you reconcile Luke xxii. 36 with the peaceful doctrines so often inculcated by Christ? To tell men to sell their garments to buy swords looks to me very like war. * * *

Answer.—The Greek word μάχαира here rendered sword is frequently used for a knife. *Vide* Gen. xxii. 6, 10. Liddell and Scott give as one of its definitions a knife for surgical, sacrificial or other purposes, and it is often employed in that sense both in the Septuagint and in classical Greek. Scholars differ with regard to the exact meaning of the passage, but all agree that it does not inculcate fighting. Wordsworth says, "A proverbial expression, intimating that they would now be reduced to a condition in which men of the world resort to such means of defence." Alford remarks—"The saying is both a description to them of their altered situation with reference to the world without, and a declaration that self-defence and self-provision would henceforth be necessary." Oosterzee and many others explain the text in a similar way. Clearly the swords—if swords were meant—were not intended to be used for purposes of warfare, because when the disciples informed the Lord that

they were already in possession of two, He replied, "It is enough." Now two swords would have been anything but enough for them all to fight with, had a combat arisen.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE AFTER FALLING.

Question 28.—Allow me heartily to thank you for the light thrown upon many difficult portions of Scripture by the answers given in your paper to the various queries that have been sent to you. I can assure you I have read them with thankfulness. I therefore venture to ask with confidence for an explanation of Hebrews vi. the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses ! * * *

Answer.—The writer is exhorting those whom he addresses to progress on to perfection, and warning them of the terrible danger that they incur should they fall away, after having been once enlightened, &c. The case put is somewhat hypothetical. Barnes says, "It is not an affirmation that any had actually fallen away, or that in fact they would do it ; but the statement is that on the supposition that they had fallen away, it would be impossible to renew them again." The word *ἀδύνατος*, here rendered impossible, does not mean necessarily that the thing could not occur, but that it would be accompanied with immense difficulty. *Vide* Matt. xvii. 20 ; xix. 26 ; Mark x. 27 ; Luke i. 37. Indeed, we frequently employ our word impossible with the same limitation. We say, It is impossible that I can perform such an act, when we simply mean to convey the idea that there are tremendous difficulties in the way of its being done. A report comes to us that some person in whom we have great confidence, and whose veracity we think is beyond dispute, has made a statement that is not true, and we reply, "The thing is impossible," meaning, simply, that the probabilities are wonderfully strong against it. In such a sense as this does the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews use the word. If, after men have once known real experimental religion, they should fall away, the difficulty of their again returning, is enormously great, for are they not crucifying to themselves Christ instead of crucifying the world unto them, by the Cross of Christ, and putting the Son of God to an open shame. The word *παράδειγμα* means

making an open show of, and exposing to the public. (*Vide* Matt. i. 19). What the Jews did outwardly, those who fall away do inwardly, they virtually crucify Christ, they "tear Him out of their hearts, where He fixed His abode, and exhibit Him to the open scoffs of the world as something powerless and common."—Bleek. While they remain in this state of mind, no repentance is possible. There is nothing in the text to cause despair on the part of those who have fallen, and yet, on the other hand, the consequences of such a fall are very alarming.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

Question 29.—The case of Jephthah's daughter mentioned in Judges xi. is sadly perplexing to me, for it seems to involve a human sacrifice. If you can throw any light upon it for me I shall be very glad! * * *

Answer.—The Bible does not say that Jephthah's daughter was offered as a burnt sacrifice; indeed, the whole tenor of the narrative implies the contrary. The opinion of most of the greatest Biblical critics, including Bush, Cassel, Delitzsch, Grotius, Hengstenberg, Keil, Kimchi, Lange, Le Clerc, Lillenthal, Schudt, Saalschütz, Waterland, &c., is that she was simply devoted to perpetual virginity, in the service of the tabernacle. With the Jews this would be looked upon as a great misfortune. The sacrifice of human beings was forbidden by the Mosaic law, and it could therefore hardly have been performed by Jephthah. The literal rendering of the vow may be as follows:—"Shall be the Lord's; or, I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." It must be remembered that the Hebrew language had but a few conjunctions, and one had consequently to be employed in several different senses. Dr. Davidson says, "It cannot be denied that *or* may be rendered *or*." (*Intro. to Old Test. I. 476.*) As this was Jephthah's only child, to devote her to perpetual celibacy would prevent him from having any posterity, which, in the eyes of a Jew, was a most humiliating calamity. All the conditions of the vow were complied with by this-being done. And the phraseology seems most consistent with this view. "On any other hypothesis the language seems

irrelevant and unmeaning. As Keil expresses it, to bewail one's virginity does not mean to mourn because one has to die a virgin, but because one has to live, and remain a virgin. Inasmuch as the history lays special emphasis upon her bewailing her virginity, this must have stood in some peculiar relation to the nature of the vow. Observe, too, that this lamentation takes place 'upon the mountains.' Cassel observes that if life had been in question her tears might have been shed at home. But lamentations of *this* character could not be uttered in the town and in the presence of men. For such plaints, modesty required the solitude of the mountains. The words of the thirty-ninth verse are very explicit. They assert that her father fulfilled his vow through the fact that 'she knew no man.' That is, the vow was fulfilled in the dedication of her life to the Lord, as a spiritual burnt-offering, in a lifelong chastity. 'Completeness of consecration as a spiritual sacrifice' seems the pervading idea in the case of Jephthah's sacrifice."—Haley. It can hardly be supposed that during the two months that elapsed between Jephthah's return and the sacrifice, some means would not have been taken to avoid if possible the barbarous and sinful act of giving this maiden as a "burnt-offering." An inquiry could have been made of the Lord, with a view to obtain a release from the vow. This was not done, and the only legitimate conclusion is that no such sacrifice was involved in the vow.

CHRIST'S INABILITY TO WORK MIRACLES BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLES' UNBELIEF.

Question 30.—How am I to understand the passage in Matt. xiii. 58? "And He did not many works there because of their unbelief." Does not this imply limitation of power, influenced by the belief of the people? * * *

Answer.—There is assuredly no limitation of power named. The causes operating to prevent the miracles are not physical, but moral. It simply means that it was incompatible with Christ's purpose to perform His mighty works under the circumstances. Alford says: "The same voice which could still the tempest, could anywhere, and under any circumstances, have

commanded diseases to obey; but in most cases of human infirmity, it was the Lord's practice to require faith in the recipient of aid, and that being wanting, the help could not be given." The passage does not say that Christ *could not* perform the miracles, but that He did not, which is a very different matter. In Mark vi. 5 the language is perhaps more as the sceptic would have it, but the meaning is the same. Indeed, one rendering of this last named text is: "And He was unwilling to do any miracles there," &c.; and in the very next verse the unbelief is referred to as the cause. We frequently say, "I could not do that," meaning not physical inability, but moral disinclination. How curious it is that men find fault with language in the Bible, which they themselves use regularly in everyday life.

DAVID TEMPTED TO NUMBER ISRAEL.

Question 31.—In 2 Samuel xxiv. 1, we read that the Lord moved David to number the people of Israel and Judah; while in 1 Chronicles xxi. 1, it says that it was Satan. How do you reconcile these passages? * * *

Answer.—In Hebrew modes of expression, and indeed of thought, it was common to ascribe to God whatever happened under His overruling providence, that is whatever He suffered to take place. But the text in Samuel has been rendered by Hervey and other eminent Biblical scholars: "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, for one moved David against them," &c. In Chronicles the word *Sah-tahn* is used without the article, and hence may be rendered simply, an *adversary*. *Vide* Num. xxii. 22, 32; 1 Sam. xxix. 4; 2 Sam. xix. 22; 1 Kings v. 5; xi. 14, 23, 25; in all of which passages it is so translated. Boothroyd, Davidson, and several others, render the passage under consideration, "An adversary stood up against Israel," &c., that is some person whose name is not given, and who proved himself to be an enemy to the best interests of Israel, urged the king to number the people. Taking this view of the texts there is no discrepancy whatever.



CHRIST CURSING THE BARREN FIG TREE.

Question 32.—Does not the fact that Christ cursed the fig tree because it had only leaves on, when “the time of figs was not yet,” prove that He was guilty of petulance and unreasonable conduct, to say the least of it? * * *

Answer.—Assuredly it proves nothing of the kind. The account as given in St. Matthew is as follows—“Now in the morning, as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, ‘let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever.’ And presently the fig tree withered away.” St. Mark adds “for the time of figs was not yet.” A writer in the *Christian Life* recently dealt with this as follows—“We must remember that a fig is not an ordinary fruit, indeed, botanically speaking, it is not a fruit at all; it is an enlarged shoot with its flower and fruit inside—what we call the seeds are the real fruits—and these shoots set twice a year, viz., in spring and in midsummer, and although in this country the spring shoots generally fail, in hot countries men gather the spring shoots at the end of the same year, and the midsummer shoots in the following year, so that a fig tree always shows what it is going to bear for the next crop. And when ‘the time of figs is not yet’ then it shows what its product will be for the next two crops, so that the absolute barrenness of the fig tree which possessed only leaves would thus be clearly apparent. The fig tree has always been considered pretty generally throughout the East as a sacred tree, and as such was regarded with a peculiar reverence, so that to destroy a fig tree was almost an act of sacrilege. Thus the fig tree in its assumed sacredness fitly embodied the idea of the proud Pharisee, and in its character of bearing leaves only and no fruit showed the absolute barrenness of their outwardly righteous but inwardly impure life. Nothing could be much more suitable to Christ’s purpose than the indication of the curse resting on such a life, and He showed this symbolically by the outward act of publicly cursing the fig tree. We are not exercised by this act any more than we are by Tarquin’s act of cutting off all the tallest poppies to show the messenger his plan of subduing the

city by cutting off all the principal citizens. But we are very much 'exercised' at the fuss made over the 'poor fig tree,' which seems a sort of 'special pet' of certain critics of Christianity, so that one might indeed sometimes imagine from the style of argument used, that the killing of the fig tree was a crime scarcely, if at all, second to that of actual murder. It is true these same critics pass over as something quite trivial, as something which detracts little, if at all, from their admiration for the Old Icelandic King, the fact that he slew his own son as a sacrifice to the gods that they might be so propitiated as to cast on shore a log of pine wood 60 ft. long; but they turn round and appeal to us whether it is possible we can any longer seriously entertain any real respect for the petulant curser of fig trees, who, because like a spoiled child He wanted figs when the time of figs was not yet, cruelly cursed the poor unoffending tree!" The quibbles of unbelievers are really very contemptible.

THE CONDEMNATION OF IDLE WORDS.

Question 33.—In Matthew xii. 36, there is a threat against idle words which I do not quite understand. Is not the condemnation out of proportion to the offence, that is, if idle words mean simply frivolous talk? * * *

Answer.—The words in the Greek are *πᾶν ῥῆμα ἄργον*, and their meaning will of course depend upon the exact force that is attached to the adjective *ἄργον*. Some have supposed that it really means "wicked," and that the condemnation consequently applies to sinful conversation. Such a rendering, however, appears to be out of harmony with the connection of the passage, and is certainly not supported by any Greek author. On the other hand, it is quite certain that the threat cannot be meant to apply to light conversation such as may provoke a laugh or afford amusement, for the Lord would not have condemned that which is beneficial both to the body and the mind. The conduct of the Pharisees is especially in question in the passage, and no doubt it is their language that is particularly referred to. Words without meaning or candour, that is, insincere words, are

probably intended. The Greek term means void of effect, such as have no corresponding result and are out of harmony with the life. The condemnation is therefore of the empty hypocritical language of persons who say one thing and mean another. Tittman paraphrases the passage as follows :—" Believe me, he who uses false and insincere language shall suffer grievous punishment ; your words if uttered with sincerity and ingenuousness shall be approved ; but if they are dissembled, although they bear the strongest appearance of sincerity, they shall be condemned." Especially is this the case in connection with religion.

THE WATER REQUIRED TO PRODUCE THE FLOOD.

Question 34.—From what source did the water come to cause the flood, so that the highest mountains on the earth were covered ? * * *

Answer.—The flood was brought about, it would appear, by excessive rain caused by evaporation taking place on the surface of the ocean to an extreme degree. The Bible is very clear on the subject : " For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights " (Gen. vii. 4). Another interpretation has been sometimes adopted in consequence of the statement that " the fountains of the great deep " were " broken up," or rather, opened ; but this does not mean that the seas washed over the land, but that the evaporation was excessive. The following remarks are from a most excellent little book just issued :—" Then as regards the expression, ' All the fountains of the great deep were opened,' the meaning is explained by Proverbs viii. 28 : ' When He made firm the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep ; where ' *the foundations of the deep* ' evidently mean, not fountains which supply the ocean, but fountains from the surface of the ocean, which, by evaporation, supply the clouds ; and ' strengthening ' the clouds above, and the fountains of the deep, is the impressing on each of them those laws by which the restricted amount of evaporation and rainfall are regulated, so that neither should be excessive. But it would seem that, at the time of the Deluge, other laws, by the direct interposition of the Almighty, were

brought into action, whereby the 'fountains of the deep were opened,' and the flood-gates of heaven (the clouds) were 'opened' likewise. That this interpretation is correct is confirmed, I think, by Proverbs iii. 20: 'By His knowledge the depths are opened, and the clouds drop down the dew or rain.' And in Job xxvi. 8, the same physical laws are referred to: 'He condenseth the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them.' When the Deluge was brought to a close, this was effected; we are told, by God 'making a wind to pass over the earth' (viii. 1), thus removing the thick vapours which were heavily charged with rain, and at the same time 'the fountains of the deep, and the windows (or flood-gates) of heaven were stopped, and (as the result) the rain from heaven was restrained.' If this explanation is correct, and, assuming that the Flood was limited in extent to the human race (which the Hebrew description quite allows) certain serious physical difficulties are entirely obviated. It is not, however, unlikely that a subsidence of the land may have taken place at the same time, thereby rendering that region a sort of extended basin for holding the waters of the Deluge, and the subsequent elevation of this may have facilitated the drainage which ensued. It may be noticed with regard to the supply of rain-clouds, that it is said in Genesis vii. 11, 'All the fountains of the great deep were opened,' from which we may, I think, conclude that distant parts of the globe contributed to this abnormal supply of rain-clouds, conveyed to this particular region probably by winds, which also removed the clouds when no longer needed. The whole occurrence must be regarded as miraculous, though the description does certainly lead us to infer that God worked by natural agencies; and the fact that marks of Noah's Deluge can scarcely anywhere be traced, seems to confirm the view that it was limited in extent, and accompanied with no great disturbance of the earth's crust." (Behind the Surface. By Edward Duke, M.A., F.G.S.) There is no reason for believing that the flood was universal, in the sense of extending over the whole earth. It was intended to destroy man, and was doubtless therefore limited to the region inhabited by him. We are not conse-

quently called upon to suppose that the Himalayas and the Andes were covered with the water, but simply that it rose above the highest mountains in the district. Such a view is perfectly compatible with the true rendering of the Hebrew text.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

Question 35.—I find a very great difficulty in reference to the command of God to Abraham, to offer up Isaac as a burnt-offering. *Vide Gen. xxii. 2.* Can you help me in the matter? * *

Answer.—The command in the original is somewhat ambiguous. It reads "make his ascent for a burnt-offering." Abraham doubtless interpreted the words literally, and thought that they implied the actual slaying of his son. But this very mistake was the means of testing his faith, and of proving his obedience. The intention on the part of the Almighty was not to bring about an outward act, but to secure a particular state of mind, a willingness to give up the most beloved object in the world. "The principle of this great trial," says Dr. Arnold, "was the same which has been applied to God's servants in every age—whether they were willing to part with what they loved best on earth, when God's service called for it." Says Kurtz, "It is true that God did not seek the slaying of Isaac *in fact*, but only the implicit surrender of the lad in mind and heart." And Hengstenberg showed that satisfaction was rendered to the Lord's command when the spiritual sacrifice was completed." All the best scholars agree in this view.

DAVID A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

Question 36.—I frequently come into contact with sceptics who make a great deal of David's sin, and of the statement that he was a man after God's own heart, will you kindly explain it for me? * * *

Answer.—There can be no doubt that sceptics make too much, both of the commendation of David, and of his sins. He is spoken of by these people as though he had been an unmitigated ruffian, and as such received the praise of God. Neither is true. The praise bestowed upon him has a reference to him simply in

his kingly character, and to the contrast that he presented in this respect to his predecessor. In comparison with Saul his heart was "perfect with the Lord his God." Says Hackett, "This commendation is not absolute, but describes the character of David in comparison with that of Saul." "It merely indicates," says a modern Biblical scholar, "a man whom God will approve in distinction from Saul, who was rejected." Then, on the other hand, David on the whole was one of the grandest personages that ever appeared in the history of the world. Dean Stanley has well said of the character of this wonderful man: "In the complexity of its elements, passion, tenderness, generosity, fierceness—the soldier, the shepherd, the poet, the statesman, the priest, the prophet, the king—the romantic friend, the chivalrous leader, the devoted father—there is no character of Old Testament at all to be compared with it. Jacob comes nearest in the variety of elements included within it. But David's character stands at a higher point of the sacred history, and represents the Jewish people just at the moment of their transition from the lofty virtues of the older system to the fuller civilisation and cultivation of the later. In this manner he becomes naturally, if one may so say, the likeness or portrait of the last and grandest development of the nation and of the monarchy, in the person and the period of Messiah. . . . His Psalms (whether those actually written by himself be many or few), have been the source of consolation and instruction beyond any other part of the Hebrew Scriptures. In them appears qualities of mind and religious perceptions, not before expressed in the sacred writings, but eminently characteristic of David—the love of nature, the sense of sin, and the tender, ardent trust in, and communion with God. No other part of the Old Testament comes so near to the spirit of the New. The Psalms are the only expressions of devotion which have been equally used through the whole Christian Church—Abyssinian, Greek, Latin, Puritan, Anglican." The fact that David's faults are recorded is a striking proof of the impartiality of Scripture. Infidels seem to forget that had not the Bible given them the information respecting David's sins, they would never have been in possession

of it. Thomas Carlyle has the following wise remarks on David, which every sceptic would do well to take to heart, coming as they do, from a man who most certainly was not biassed in favour of Christianity: "David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of sin. And therefore the unbelievers sneer, and ask, 'Is this your man according to God's heart?' The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often baffled, never ended struggle of it be forgotten?"

David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest, human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever, with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew." David's repentance was as heartfelt, deep, and thorough as his sins were flagrant, and in opposition to the law of God. He stands before the world as a grand moral hero, despite his sins, challenging the admiration of all mankind.

THE BURIAL PLACE OF CHRIST.

Question 37.—Having been much interested in your very able discourse on "The Resurrection of Christ," I would be glad to have some information regarding the tomb, and the stone that was rolled to the door to close the vault. * * *

Answer.—These eastern tombs were very unlike the graves or vaults that we employ at the present day in this country. In one of the journals of the "Palestine Exploration Society" the following interesting notes referring to the tomb in which the body of the Lord was deposited, appeared. They tend to throw considerable light on the subject: "All accounts concur in describing it as an excavated sepulchre, a new and recently finished work, and not as yet used for the purpose of burial. The general idea concerning the tomb is that it was single-celled. When constructing it, Joseph could never have had any idea of the

sacred use to which it would be applied, and must have had in view a multi- (not uni-) locular (many Eastern tombs consist of a large chamber with recesses in the walls for the corpses) *family* sepulchre. The narratives uphold the idea of a multi-locular (many-celled) tomb; had it been otherwise, the angel's invitation, 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay' (Matt. xxviii. 6), would have been unnecessary, for a glance would have revealed the interior to the two Mary's. St. Mark's narrative is more clear; he describes evidently an ante-chamber, from which the loculi (cells) branch off; and in this case there were apparently only two rows, right and left. On entering the chamber, the Mary's find the angel 'sitting on the right side,' probably at the entrance of the lately tenanted loculus (cell), which he points out to the affrighted women. 'Behold the place where they laid Him.' According to St. Luke, it was only on entering the chamber that the women found not the Lord's body (xxiv. 3); if it had been a one-celled tomb, a glance from the entrance would have revealed its emptiness. Again, the presence of a loculus branching off from the chamber would necessitate the stooping of Peter to see the grave-clothes laid by themselves (xxiv. 12). So with St. John, the chamber of the sepulchre admits both Peter and John (xx. 8), from which they view the vacant cell, and carefully-arranged grave-clothes. The tomb was closed by a great stone rolled to the entrance. How was this done? Here again the general idea is very vague, and refers to the laborious rolling of a huge spherical mass of rock (for only such could roll) to the door of the tomb, no attention being paid to the fact that such a mass could not accurately fit the upright entrance, much less receive the protection of the seal. The Rev. J. Porter describes a Jewish tomb which was accurately closed by a mill-stone-like alab which was rolled down an incline plane, at the bottom of which was the circular entrance to the sepulchre. Some such arrangement would be necessary to meet the requirements of St. Matthew's narrative, where the angel rolls away (not back) the stone and sits upon it."

The writer also adds some very interesting notes respecting the locality of the tomb. He says:—"According to St. Matthew's

narrative we are, I think, driven to the conclusion that at the scene of the burial there were two hill-sides, with a valley between them, for he describes the two Mary's as 'sitting over against the sepulchre' (xxvii. 61), as if, supposing the tomb had been on the side of Olivet, the Mary's had been looking on from the opposite side of the valley, beneath the city walls, but yet in full view, the distance being about 150 yards.

St. John minutely describes the locality (of the tomb):—"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden (xxviii. 1), which St. Matthew and St. Mark describes as near a place, or state, or hamlet, called Gethsemane (*ἡ Γεθσημανε*, winepress; shemen, oil). Now, was the garden of the agony identical with the garden of the burial? If not why does St. John use the same word (*κῆπος*) to describe two localities? If they were (identical), then we can understand why our Lord, 'ofttimes resorted' to the garden which witnessed His agony, and was to be the scene of His burial, and in its gloomy shade He trod in solitude the winepress of the wrath of the Almighty God. Gethsemane witnessed the agony and burial; if this be allowed, then it witnessed also the crucifixion, for the garden was in the place where He was crucified. . . . The women watched, beholding 'afar off' (Matt. xxvii. 55). St. Mark describes the centurion in command as standing 'over against Him' (xv. 39), and he and St. Luke also describes the women as 'watching afar off.' I should fancy that the site of the crucifixion (and burial) must be sought along the Bethany-road, on the eastern side of the valley of Jehoshaphat."

DID ABRAHAM MARRY HIS SISTER?

Question 38.—In Genesis xx. 12, Abraham declares that Sarah, his wife, was also his sister. Was this true? and if so, did he not in marrying her commit a crime according to the Levitical Law? (Lev. xviii. and xx.) * * *

Answer.—In ancient times, and with eastern people, the terms "brother," "sister," &c., were used with much greater latitude than we give them to-day. They correspond with the Latin word *parentes*, or with our word "cousin." This latter term is

used by us to describe all kinds of relationship, and sometimes none at all. In the Scriptures, Lot, Abraham's nephew, is called his brother. (Genesis xiv. 12, 16.) Rebekah's mother, and "brother" said unto her, "Thou art our sister." (Gen. xxiv. 60.) Jacob speaks of himself as his uncle's "brother" (Gen. xxiv. 12), and Dinah is styled by her brothers "our daughter" (Gen. xxxiv. 17). The term "sister," therefore, applied to Sarah, shows that she was a near relative of Abraham, but by no means describes the degree of relationship existing between them. Bush and Delitzsch think that she may have been a niece of Abraham, daughter of his brother, or half-brother, Haran. And this is the view taken by Josephus, the Talmud, Jonathan's Targum, Rashi, and almost all Jewish writers. It was also held by Jerome. Many ancient Jewish and Christian writers identify Sarah with Isaac (Gen. xi. 29). Lange suggests that she was simply an "adopted sister" of Abraham. In any case we are not justified in saying that the relationship fell within the prohibited degrees of matrimony.

GOD ONLY IMMORTAL.

Question 39.—I read in 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16, "The King of kings and Lord of lords. Who only hath immortality." How, then, can you speak of man as immortal?

Answer.—The text no more means that God has immortality exclusively, than the passage in Rom. xvi. 27, where He is spoken of as "God only wise," implies that men have no wisdom. God is the sole Fountain of Wisdom as He is of Immortality, and other beings are wise and immortal only so far as they receive wisdom and immortality from Him. In Deity these qualities are inherent and underived. Theodoret has it, "Immortal by essence, not by participation," and Justin Martyr says, "He has this, not through the will of another, as all other immortals, but through His own essence." This text in no way favours the doctrine of Thnetopsychism, an old heresy now being revived in certain quarters with a good deal of zeal.

OUGHT WOMEN TO BE ALLOWED TO PREACH ?

Question 40.—I find in 1 Cor. chap. xiv., and verse 34, St. Paul saying, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Does not this condemn women preaching as we find them doing at the present day? Can you throw any light upon the subject? * * *

Answer.—Many able commentators think that the language of Paul does prohibit in every place and for all time, the speaking of women upon religious topics in public assemblies. And the fact that this is the opinion of such men as Alford, Ellicott, Conybeare, Neander, Wordsworth, Schaff, Meyer, &c., should lead us to treat such a view with respect. At the same time, much may be said on the other side. It is difficult with such passages before us as Luke-ii. 36-38; Acts ii. 18, xviii. 26, xxi. 9; Rom. xvi. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 5; and Phil. iv. 3, to come to the conclusion that the Apostle's injunction in the text in question was general, rather than local. There was probably something in the situation and surroundings of those to whom St. Paul was writing, which justified the prohibition in that particular case. Sensuality prevailed in the city of Corinth to an alarming extent. Mr. Conybeare speaks of the "peculiar licentiousness of manners" prevalent there, and adds, "So notorious was this, that it had actually passed into the vocabulary of the Greek tongue, and the very word 'to Corinthianize' meant 'to play the wanton;' nay, the bad reputation of the city had become proverbial, even in foreign languages, and is immortalized by the Latin poets." The same author, enumerating the evils which prevailed at that time in the Corinthian Church, says that "women had forgotten the modesty of their sex, and came forward unveiled (contrary to the habit of their country) to address the public assembly." Here we have the probable explanation of the prohibition. The Corinthians would deem the fact of a woman speaking in public a proof that she was unchaste. Even Neander thinks that in this passage St. Paul merely refers, for example, to what was going on in the Church at Corinth. The ancient Montanists thought that Paul simply meant to restrain females from didactic addresses, but not from

the public expression of their religious experience. Dr. Adam Clarke considers that the Apostle merely prohibits a woman's questioning, disputing, &c., as men were allowed to do in the synagogue and other public assemblies, and this is, in our opinion, the correct view. They were to speak in a modest manner, by way of suggestion, and not to become polemics, and to indulge in wrangling and controversy.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

Question 41.—Will you please to explain 1 Peter, chap. iii., verses 19, 20, in your valuable paper? It seems a great bulwark with Roman Catholics in substantiation of purgatory. * * *

Answer.—The phrase "quickened by the spirit, by (or in) which he also went and preached unto the spirits in prison," &c., is construed by many eminent scholars to mean simply that Christ was preached by Noah, to the antediluvians, and that no personal visit is intended. Alford, however, entertains a different view. He says: "With the great majority of commentators, ancient and modern, I understand these words to say that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce His work of redemption, preach salvation in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the flood was hanging over them." Professor Taylor Lewis also observes: "We are taught that there was a work of Christ in Hades. He descended into Hades; he makes proclamation (*κηρυξεν*) in Hades to those who are there 'in ward.'" That this interpretation was adopted almost universally by the early Christian Church there can be no doubt. Says Professor Huidekoper: "In the second and third centuries, every branch and division of Christians, so far as their records enable us to judge, believed that Christ preached to the departed."—*Christ's Mission to the Underworld*, pp. 51, 52. Dietelmair, in his elaborate "*Historia Dogmatis de Descensu Christi ad Inferos*," says emphatically that this doctrine "*in omni coetu Christiano creditum*."—See chapters iv. and vi. By some writers, amongst whom may be named Birks, it has been

supposed that the preaching was to those who repented when the flood came, but who were shut out of the ark. The expression "in prison," however, seems to refute this theory, for these words are never used in Scripture of the righteous. Spirits in "Abraham's bosom," and in "Paradise" are not in prison, although in Hades, for the great gulf separates the prisoners from the saved. It must be borne in mind that it is not said that He preached the gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*), but simply heralded, that is, made announcement of His finished work, thereby confirming what had been said by Noah, and declaring the condemnation of the antediluvians, and its cause. In no sense can any support for the Romish doctrine of purgatory be found in the text. Purification by fire is not even hinted at, and the persons preached to are such as even Roman Catholics would hardly place in purgatory at all. Very much more might be said on the text, but our space is necessarily limited.

WAS IT JUDAS' MISSION TO BETRAY CHRIST?

Question 42.—Was it Judas' mission to betray Christ, and if so, will he on that account be cast into everlasting darkness? * *

Answer.—It was certainly not the mission of Judas to betray Christ, if by that he meant that God had appointed this particular man to do the work. Our Lord tell us that "it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). The offence is predicted because it is foreseen by God, as was the crime of Judas, but this in no sense relieves the offender of the responsibility. God's foreknowledge is not the cause of the offence, it simply sees what the perverse will of the man will do, and as a consequence predicts it before the act has occurred, just as a human being describes an event after it has taken place. Foreknowledge is not foreordination. We each foreknow that the sun will rise to-morrow morning, but such knowledge has nothing to do with the cause of the event foreseen. And to God there is no past, nor present, but an eternal Now.

CAN GOD BE SEEN ?

Question 43.—If in your answers to queries you would clear up the apparent contradiction between Genesis xxxii. 30, "I have seen God face to face," and Exodus xxxiii., "And He said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see my face and live," and John's Gospel, i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time," I should feel greatly obliged! * * *

Answer.—In the Old Testament all the manifestations of God were made through a chosen medium. The ancient Jewish Church recognized a Divine Person under the name of *Mémo*—a term having the same meaning as the *Logos* or the *Word* of the New Testament. This Person had divine attributes ascribed to Him, and was therefore fitly called God. In His divine Essence Deity cannot be seen. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him; but the *Mémo*, or Word was seen and heard and spoken with on many occasions. Modern Jews do not believe in this Divine *Mémo*, but herein they show to what an extent they have departed from the primitive and pure faith of their fathers. Their ancient commentators, or Targumists, as they are called, are clear and explicit enough upon the subject. The Chaldee paraphrases abound with references to this great and mighty Person. From them we learn that it was the *Mémo*, or Word, that always appeared under the name of the Angel of the Lord; and they, as well as the Scriptures, ascribe to this Being Divine honours, and call Him by the sacred, awful, and uncommunicable name of *Jehovah*. Hundreds of passages could be quoted from the Targums to prove this. Suffice it to say that it was the Word, or *Mémo*, who spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden; who appeared to Abraham in the door of his tent; who led Israel in the pillar of a cloud; who shut the door of the ark on Noah; who wrought miracles through Moses; who destroyed Sodom; who punished Israel for making the golden calf; who made man after His own image; and by whom, in fact, the world was created. What a marvellous uniformity we see between the teaching of the ancient Jews and the New Testament, although now Judaism has become so terribly corrupted! The Jerusalem Targum says that

God created the world by His wisdom—that is, the *Logos*; for so Philo, also a Jew, explains it. And Paul, speaking of Christ, says, "By whom also He made the worlds" (Dr. Saxton's *Theistic Problems*, pp. 139, 40). Taking this view of the question, there is no contradiction whatever in the passages quoted. The *Mimra* was seen in the Old Dispensation, as was the *Logos* in the New, but no mortal being can look upon the Divine Essence of God.

WAS PETER THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE CHURCH?

Question 44.—What is the meaning of Matthew xvi. 18, 19, where Christ says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," etc.? * * *

Answer.—There is an exalted play upon the word "rock," which is lost in our translation. In the *Aramaic*, or *Syro-Chaldaic* language used by our Lord, the same word stands for Peter and rock, as it does in modern French. Even in Greek the two words differ: *ὁ εἰ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ*. The rock upon which the Church is built was not Peter personally, for Christ Himself is the only foundation stone (Ps. cxviii. 22, Isaiah xxviii. 16, 1 Cor. iii. 11, Eph. ii. 20, 1 Peter ii. 6), but that confession of faith which the Apostle had just made, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." This is the everlasting rock, the foundation stone of the Church of Christ in all ages. The keys named are the emblems of authority, as they were always with the ancients (Isaiah xxii. 22, Rev. iii. 7, 8). They are given to Peter because he was the first to make confession of his faith; and he afterwards opened the door of the preaching of the Gospel both to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in the case of Cornelius. The same power was speedily afterwards extended to all the Apostles (Matt. xviii. 18). None of them ever forgave sin. There is not a shadow of proof that Peter was ever at Rome, to say nothing of his being Bishop of the Church there.

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

Question 45.—I read in the 24th chapter of St. Luke that when Christ appeared to His disciples on the first day of His

resurrection, there were eleven present at Jerusalem, and St. John says that when Christ appeared to them the first day of His resurrection that Thomas was not with them. Will you be so kind as to say how this can be reconciled, and how there could be eleven without Thomas? * * *

Answer.—There were not eleven without Thomas, and he was absent as John says (xx. 24). Nor does Luke say anything to the contrary, as will be seen by a careful reading of his narrative. He tells us that when the two returned to Jerusalem, they found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them" (xxiv. 33). Later on—at what interval we are not told—the Lord appeared (a new paragraph commences at verse 36), only ten being then present. Clearly the time that elapsed was short, because the conversation regarding the resurrection was still going on, but in the meantime Thomas had left. The appearance to the eleven took place on the Sunday following (John xx. 26 et ss.)

HATH MAN ANY PRE-EMINENCE ABOVE A BEAST?

Question 46.—Will you kindly give me your opinion on the 19th verse of the 3rd chapter of Ecclesiastes: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity?"

Answer.—It is quite certain that Solomon does not mean that man and the lower animals are alike to be totally extinguished at death. For in this very book we have the clearest possible indication of a future life. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it (xii. 7). And in the book of Proverbs, it is almost impossible to read a single chapter without discovering that a future state of retribution must have been uppermost in the mind of the author (*Vide* "The Doctrine of Immortality, as Taught in the Old Testament," by Dr. Sexton.) It is certain, therefore, that Solomon believed firmly in a future state of reward and punishment, and that consequently such passages as appear to teach the contrary.

are susceptible of an interpretation in harmony with that fact. The one thing that befalleth the man and the beast is death. As the one dieth so dieth the other, and they have both one breath, that is, they breathe the same atmosphere, and upon that process of respiration their life depends. This is strictly true as a matter of fact, and equally so is the statement that one has no pre-eminence above the other. As far as their material organization is concerned, both are dust, and both will return to the earth from which they originally came. There, however, the comparison ends, for the writer immediately goes on to say, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth" (v. 21), pointing unmistakably to the great difference between man and the lower animals, despite the similarity of his material organization to theirs.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY OF CHRIST.

Question 47.—Will you please explain the first six verses of the 5th chapter of Micah? I don't know how to reconcile it, if the person referred to means Christ. I never heard of Christ going to war with the Assyrians. * * *

Answer.—The prophecy most certainly refers to Christ, as any one who reads it carefully will be convinced. His birthplace is announced and His Divinity enunciated. "His goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity," so it should be rendered. "He shall stand," i.e., persevere, His kingdom shall endure, and He shall sedulously watch over and guard His flock. Assyria was at that time Israel's most powerful enemy, and she is made the representative of all foes to the people of God, who should come afterwards. It is a striking fact that both Micah and Isaiah (ch. x. 24-34) agree in foretelling the deliverance from Assyria, although that nation was then in the height of its great power. It must be remembered that the prophecy is not as yet thoroughly fulfilled, for the remnant of the children of Israel are still dispersed, but will some day be gathered to their own land.

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.

Question 48.—Would you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage in Revelation v. 6: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." * * *

Answer.—The Lamb no doubt typifies Christ, who is frequently so designated (Isaiah liii. 7; John i. 29, 36; Acts viii. 32; 1 Peter i. 19), and here He gives indications of having been slain. Christ crucified is the most conspicuous figure in the heavenly world, as He is the sole source of Gospel truth here below. In this passage He is portrayed as being in the midst of the assembled company. Horns in Scripture always represent strength, and the number seven perfection, hence the seven horns are perfect power or might. There is a contrast here to the anti-christian powers of this world, so often referred to in the Bible (Dan. vii. 7, 20; viii. 3; Zech. i. 19, 21). Eyes are symbolical of watchfulness, hence they portray God's perfect providence and care over His creatures. The sevenfold spirit of perfection issuing from the Redeemer, is sent forth to display its wondrous supernatural energy. The vision shows us the consummation to which all events in the seals, trumpets and vials converge, viz., the setting up of the visible kingdom of the Lord.

THE FIRMAMENT AND THE WATERS.

Question 49.—I shall be glad if you will give an explanation of the firmament, and of the two waters which it is said to have divided. Gen. i. 6, 7.

Answer.—The word rendered firmament is *רָקִיעַ* *rah-ket-ag*, and it means extension, an expanse. So it is translated by Benisch, Kalisch, Delitzsch, Keil, and Lange. Previous to this time the atmosphere was saturated with an excess of moisture, so that the watery vapours pressed upon the surface of the earth. The Hebrews were well acquainted with the natural process of evaporation by which the upper waters above the firmament were supplied (*vide* I. Kings xviii. 44), so that the statement often made

by sceptics that the writer of this book supposed the existence of a great celestial ocean supported on a solid firmament, is utterly without foundation. At first, however, the water existing so abundantly in the atmosphere, formed one great mass, the upper and the lower having no separating line between them. God therefore made or prepared the firmament by the expansive power of heat so that the lighter parts of the water were carried up and suspended in the visible heavens, and thus became divided from the great ocean which covered the land. The command was, "Let it be dividing or continue to divide." The separation between the heavier mass below and the more volatile portion above was to be a permanent one, hence the firmament or expanse between them. Ruskin illustrates the matter as follows:—"An unscientific reader knows little about the manner in which the volume of the atmosphere surrounds the earth; but I imagine that he could hardly glance at the sky when rain was falling in the distance, and see the level line of the bases of the clouds from which the shower descended, without being able to attach an instant and easy meaning to the words 'expansion in the midst of the waters.' And if, having once seized the idea, he proceeded to examine more accurately, he would perceive at once, if he had ever noticed anything of the nature of the clouds, that the level line of their bases did indeed most severely and stringently divide 'waters from waters,'—that is to say, divide water in its collective and tangible state from the water in its divided and aerial state; or the waters which *fall* and *flow* from those which *rise* and *float*. I understand the making the firmament to signify that (so far as man is concerned) most magnificent ordinance of the clouds; the ordinance, that as the great plain of waters was formed on the face of the earth, so also a plain of waters should be stretched along the height of air, and the face of the cloud answer the face of the ocean; and that this upper and heavenly should be of waters, as it were, glorified in their nature, no longer quenching the fire, but now bearing fire in their own bosoms; no longer murmuring only when the winds raise them, or rocks divide, but answering each other with their own voices from pole to pole; no longer

restrained by established shores, and guided through unchanging channels, but going forth at His pleasure like the armies of the angels, and choosing their encampments upon the heights of the hills; no longer hurried downwards for ever, moving but to fall nor lost in the lightless accumulation of the abyss, but covering the East and the West with the waving of their wings, and robing the gloom of the farther infinite with a vesture of diverse colours, of which the threads are purple and scarlet, and the embroideries flame." On this point Scripture and modern science are perfectly in harmony. The word translated *firmament* means something which combines the idea of pressure with that of expansion, the exact characteristic of the atmosphere which surrounds the earth, and which, therefore, still divides the waters from the waters—the ocean below from the clouds above.

GOD HARDENING PHARAOH'S HEART.

Question 50.—How could Pharaoh have been a free agent when we are distinctly told (Ex. iv. 21) that his heart should be hardened? * * *

Answer.—In reference to this process of hardening the heart, the Scripture says in some places that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and in others that Pharaoh hardened it himself. Both of these statements are true. God may be always said to do what is done by His laws, and yet those laws can be directed to certain issues by human beings. And this applies not only to physical laws, engraven on every portion of material nature, but to those deeper and more enduring laws of a spiritual character, that are indelibly imprinted upon the human soul. Let a man persistently refuse the light, stifle the cries of conscience, put away God from his thoughts, yield to temptation, and continue in wrong doing, and it will follow as the night the day that his heart will be hardened. This is a spiritual law as irresistible in its operation as gravitation. In such a case the hardening is effected by the man's own act, for it is the result of his choice, and it is likewise effected by God, for it was He who framed and administered the laws by which the result was brought about. God, therefore, often in supplying us with blessings indirectly

hardens our hearts. Stuart says—and very truly—concerning Pharaoh: "The Lord hardened his heart, because the Lord was the author of commands and messages and miracles which were the occasion of Pharaoh's hardening his own heart." Keil, on the very text quoted, remarks: "In this twofold manner God produces hardness, not only *permissive*, but *effective*, i.e., not only by giving time and space for the manifestations of human opposition, even to the utmost limits of creaturely freedom, but still more by those continued manifestations of His will which drive the hard heart to such utter obduracy that it is no longer capable of returning, and so giving over the hardened sinner to the judgment of damnation. This is what we find in the case of Pharaoh." There is no infringement on the freedom of the will in Pharaoh's case, any more than in our own. Says Dr. Davidson, speaking of this subject: "This does not mean that He (God) infused positive wickedness or obstinacy into the mind, or that He influenced it in any way inconsistent with His perfections, but that He withdrew His grace, allowed the heart of Pharaoh to take its natural course, and thus to become harder and harder. He permitted it to be hardened." It is a terrible thing this struggle between man's will and God's. And that such a struggle is not only possible, but common, we should learn from our own experience, even if history had not testified to its existence in others. The Scriptures are in this case as in every other, true to human nature.

IS ANGER A SIN?

Question 51.—What am I to understand by the text, "Be ye angry and sin not?" Eph. iv. 26. Is not anger itself a sin?
* * *

Answer.—Anger is not in itself a sin; it becomes so by being cherished and nurtured, hence the text goes on to say, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," or more correctly rendered "provocation." There is a moral indignation which is often justly called forth, that may be described as anger, which is clearly not only not sinful, but is even commendable. This is to be distinguished from furious and unreasonable ebullitions of evil temper.

Bishop Butler says that the text under consideration "is by no means to be understood as an encouragement to indulge ourselves in anger; the sense being certainly this, 'Though ye be angry, sin not;' yet here is evidently a distinction made between anger and sin—between the natural passion and sinful anger." All the passions are natural, but they require to be as carefully guarded and kept within due bounds.

WAS IT RIGHT FOR DAVID TO HATE HIS ENEMIES?

Question 52.—I have often wondered why David prayed so bitterly against his enemies. He says (Psalm cxxxix. 21), "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." Is it right to pray so when Christ commands us (Matt. v. 44), "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you?" An explanation will much oblige. * * *

Answer.—The language here used no doubt appears much stronger to us than it did to the Jews, because it is intensely oriental. It probably simply expresses David's utter abhorrence of the vile conduct of the wicked. When he saw their depraved and abominable acts he "hated" them, while as human beings he may have felt pity for them, and even loved them and desired their repentance. "Because," says Calvin, "devoted to the cultivation of piety he thoroughly abhorred impiety." At the same time, it must not be forgotten that in our day we have the full clear light of the gospel dispensation which David had not. We should not now use the same language, because it would be out of harmony with our higher Christian principles, to say nothing of its being foreign to our western mode of speech.

SALUTE NO MAN BY THE WAY.

Question 53.—Is not the command given in Luke x. 4, to "salute no man by the way," to say the least of it, to act in an unfriendly spirit to those who might be met on the road? * * *

Answer.—The disciples were sent forth on an important mission, and they were ordered to throw the whole of their energies

into their work, and to waste no time in idle ceremonies and customs. And the extremely formal salutations in use in the East would have involved considerable delay. The reader may obtain a clear notion of these customs from the following description taken from the works of Van Lennep, by the author of "Biblical Things not Generally Known," a most useful work for biblical students: "In performing the duties of hospitality to a traveller or visitor, be he a stranger or a friend, the host receives him in his best room, or in his *litsen*, if the weather be mild. The reception-room becomes his apartment for the time being. Here his friends call upon him, and here he transacts his business; here, also, he takes his meals, his host himself waiting upon him, if he desires to show him special respect; and here he sleeps at night upon bedding kept for the purpose in a closet of the same room. Before his arrival a messenger announces his approach to the master of the house, who hastens to his gate, holds the bridle and stirrup, and helps him to dismount. If they are old friends, or of rank nearly equal, they embrace, each placing his right hand on the other's left shoulder, and kissing him on the left cheek. It was thus that treacherous Joab embraced Amasa, and instead of placing his right hand upon his shoulder, seized him by the beard and stabbed him 'with the point of his left' 'in the fifth rib' (2 Samuel, xi. 9, 10). And thus did Judas Iscariot kiss our Lord."

"The saluon is now exchanged, 'Peace be unto thee. Answer, 'And unto thee be peace.' But if the visitor be of a higher rank than his host, the latter kisses him not, but 'bows down to the earth' when he salutes him, touching the ground with his hand, which he then brings to his lips and his head (Gen. xviii. 2). This mode of salutation existed in Persia and Egypt, being pictured upon the monuments. The host now leads the way into the house, places his friend in the seat of honour, the chief corner of the divan; then takes a seat by his side, if on a footing of equality, or kisses his hand, the hem of his garment, or even his feet, according to his rank, and, retiring a few steps, crosses his hands upon his girdle—the habitual posture of the servant—thus signifying that he is waiting for orders. The guest, on the other

hand, seems not to be outdone in politeness; he accepts the honours due to his position, but endeavours to make his host feel at ease by insisting upon his sitting down: 'No, not on the floor, I beg you, nor there on the farthest corner of the divan, but here by my side.' Then follow salutations, always begun by the man of higher rank, with inquiries concerning health, and a host of empty phrases which display the good breeding of the parties. The Persians excel all other Orientals in the use of these phrases and forms of etiquette, which they carry to a pitch often ridiculed by their neighbours. It is curious to find, Herodotus states, that the Persians in his day 'paid so great attention to forms of address that one could thereby at once ascertain the rank of a stranger; when of equal rank, instead of speaking they kiss each other on the lips; when one is a little inferior to the other, the kiss is given on the cheek; and when the difference of rank is great, the inferior prostrates himself upon the ground.'"

The elaborate and hindering salutations customary on casual meetings of friends at the road-side have been otherwise illustrated. Such salutations are particularly formal and tedious among the Druses and other non-Christian sects of the present time. Dr. Bonar gives the following strikingly illustrative incident:—"As we were turning in by a narrow, dark, arched lane at Cairo, my donkey-man sprung aside with a loud shout of delight and left me. Of course I halted, not knowing my way. Some donkeys were coming on in front, and my driver had seen in the foremost of the riders a brother of a friend who was returning from a journey. My donkey-man was on foot, but this mattered not. In a moment he leaped up and seized his friend round the neck, hugging him most strenuously, and kissing him first on one side of the face and then on the other. This mutual operation being over they inquired after each other's health, and then went on their way."

HOW WAS CHRIST THE FIRST FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT?

Question 54.—In what way could our Saviour have been the first fruits of them that slept, when others had been raised from the tomb before Him? * * *

Answer.—The resurrection of Jesus was of a character totally unlike that of any of the other persons who were restored to life. He rose in a new sense, to a new and higher life, while they were simply resuscitated to a fresh term of temporal existence in this world. He arose, burst the bonds of death, to die no more; the rest were raised for a time, but must in the end pass again through the gates of death. Rom. vi. 9, affords an explanation of the whole difficulty. Over Him, "death no more hath dominion." Thus He is truly the "first begotten of the dead."

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

Question 55.—Paul, addressing the Corinthians, says—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and writing to the Thessalonians in his first epistle, says, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." Does not this prove that the coming of the Lord was expected in that day? And yet in the second epistle to the Thessalonians he warns those to whom he writes against expecting that the day would come until after there had been a falling away, &c., and against men believing "that the day of Christ was at hand. * *

Answer.—This is a "discrepancy," of which Baur makes a good deal; but it amounts to nothing whatever. The last passage reads, in the Revised Version, "as that the day of the Lord is now present." But even De Wette, who cannot be accused of leaning to orthodox Christianity, says, "It is no contradiction of the first epistle that Paul after exhorting them to steadfastly await the second coming of Christ (1 Thess. iv. 15), felt himself bound to moderate their too excited expectations; and 2 Thess. ii. 1, &c., is completely in the spirit of primitive Christianity." So Dr. Davidson, speaking of the passage in 1 Cor. xv. 52, says, "The expression we means such Christians as shall then be alive; all believers then living are grouped together." And in 1 Thess. iv. 15, 17, he says, "Hence 'we which are alive and remain,' &c., can only mean 'such Christians as live and remain.' Paul employs himself and the early Christians

as the representatives of those succeeding Christians who should be alive at the Redeemer's second advent. Thus in Deut. xxx. 1, the generation addressed is the representative of a succeeding one; and in John vi. 32, a succeeding generation is employed to represent a past one." There is no evidence that the apostles expected the second coming of Christ to take place in their day. Says Andrew Fuller: "Everything with respect to degrees is what it is by comparison. Taking into consideration the whole of time, the coming of Christ was 'at hand.' There is reason to believe from this, and many other passages of the New Testament, that the sacred writers considered themselves as having passed the meridian of time, and entered into the afternoon of the world, as we may say. Such appears to be the import of the following among other passages, 'God hath in *these last days* spoken,' &c. . . . But taking into consideration only a single generation, the day of Christ was not at hand. The Thessalonians, though a very amiable people, were by some means mistaken on this subject, so as to expect that the end of the world would take place in their lifetime, or within a very few years. To correct this error, which might have been productive of very serious evils, was a principal design of the second epistle to that people."

DOES NOT THE BIBLE SANCTION ROBBERY?

Question 56.—I read in Exodus iii. 21, 22, that the Israelites on leaving Egypt were to borrow several kinds of valuable articles of the Egyptians. Now as these things were taken away without the slightest idea of their ever being returned, does not this look like a mild form of robbery? * * *

Answer.—To borrow things with no intention of restoring them to their rightful owners, is not a mild, but a very marked, form of robbery. But did the Israelites do this? We think not. The explanation given by Michaelis, which is accepted by many theologians, is as follows: He thinks that when the articles were borrowed, there was every intention on the part of the Israelites to return them, but that in the hurry of their midnight departure, when they were driven out by the pressing command of the king,

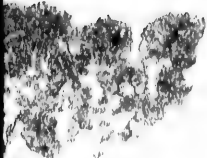
they had no opportunity to do so. Hence they carried the articles away with them, intending to restore them as soon as an opportunity presented itself. Such an opportunity never came, for in a day or two the Egyptians made war upon them. This hostile act, this "breach of the peace," completely changed the relationship between the two parties, and justified the Israelites in detaining the property of their enemies as articles, to a certain extent, "contraband of war." Thus this great scholar maintains that the act was far removed from robbery, being simply a detention of an enemies' property after a declaration of war. Ewald holds that since the Israelites could not return to Egypt in consequence of the treachery of Pharaoh, and the incidents on the Red Sea, they were not bound to return the borrowed articles, and that they consequently did right in keeping them and despoiling the Egyptians. He sees in this turn of affairs a kind of "divine recompense," a piece of "high retributive justice, far above human inequalities, that those who had long been oppressed in Egypt should now be forced to borrow the necessary vessels from the Egyptians, and be obliged by Pharaoh's subsequent treachery to retain them, and thus be indemnified for long oppression." There is, however, a far simpler and, in our view, a more satisfactory explanation. The Hebrew word שָׁאַל *sha-al*, means, according to Fuerst and Gesenius, to ask or demand, as well as to borrow. It is used in the former sense in Psalm ii. 8, "Ask of me," &c. There is no good reason why we should not adopt this rendering in Exodus. We are told that "the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians," also that Moses was "very great" in their sight. The awe which they felt for Moses, as also for the Israelites so signally favoured of God, induced the Egyptians to comply with the demands of the Hebrews to that extent, that the latter "spoiled," that is, *impoverished*, the former. Says Hengstenberg: "They had spoiled Israel; now Israel carries away the spoil of Egypt." This author, with Rosenmüller, Lillienthal, Tholuck, Winer, Lange, Murphy, Keil, Wordsworth, and a host of critics, understands that the Hebrews asked and received these things simply as gifts. And Josephus corroborates this view,

saying of the Egyptians, "They honoured the Hebrews with gifts; some in order to secure their speedy departure, and others on account of neighbourly intimacy with them." This explanation relieves the entire difficulty.—Haley. It will be seen, therefore, that there is no ground whatever for charging the Israelites with theft, or for saying that the Bible inculcates dishonesty.

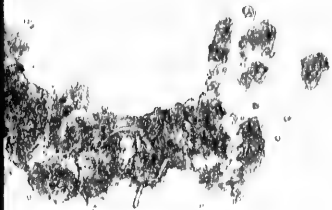
WILL THOSE WHO SEEK GOD EARLY FIND HIM?

Question 57.—I shall be glad if you will inform me how I am to reconcile the two following texts: "They that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs viii. 17). "They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Proverbs i. 28). * * *

Answer.—The discrepancy is apparent, not real. Entirely different classes of persons are referred to, as may be seen by the context. The first text is intended to apply to the young, those who seek God in early life. The word rendered "seek early" comes from a noun denoting the morning dawn. "It signifies," says Zöehler, "to seek something while it is yet early, in the obscurity of the morning twilight, and so illustrates eager, diligent seeking." This is the view taken by such eminent critics as Noyes, Davidson, Parkhurst, Moore, Stochius, Opatius Frey, &c. It means, therefore, "those who seek me in youth shall find me." The other text contemplates obstinate and hardened transgressors who are described in the chapter as "fools" and "scorners," who have hated knowledge, not chosen the fear of the Lord, and despised His reproofs. It is rendered by Stuart, "They shall earnestly seek me and shall not find me." In the one case we have the young seeking God in their early years, and in the other impenitent sinners calling for mercy in the hour of their approaching doom, and in the sight of the coming retribution through fear of impending punishment. God is always to be found of those who seek Him in the true spirit of penitence, but fear may cry aloud for mercy where there is no true compunction for sin. And herein lies all the difference between the two cases.



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HAS THE EARTH PILLARS, CORNERS, AND SIDES?

Question 58.—The following passages record the earth as having foundations, pillars, four corners, and corner stones and sides. Job xxxviii. 4-6; ix. 6; xxxviii. 18; 1 Samuel ii. 8; Psalm lxxv. 3; civ. 5; Isaiah xlviii. 13; xi. 12; Revelation vii. 1; Psalm cii. 25; Hebrews i. 10. The proved conclusion of science is that the earth is round and flat at the poles. Will you be good enough to explain the above passages? Secularists make a regular practice of quoting these passages to show that the Bible is not in harmony with the science of the present day, and what every school boy is taught. * * *

Answer.—Careful consideration of all these passages will show that there is nothing taught in them contrary to our modern scientific knowledge of the shape of the earth. In the first one God is represented as asking Job, "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" and then saying further, "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? (or made to sink, according to the Hebrew) or who laid the corner stone thereof?" It must be remembered that this same writer says in another place, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." Job xxvi. 7. Clearly, therefore, the term foundation is used analogically, and the allusion, as has been suggested by Mr. Duke, in his work, "Beneath the Surface," is to the great law of gravitation, by means of which the globe is supported in space. Mr. Duke remarks "that this is the 'foundation' here intended is amply confirmed by other passages of Scripture. I turn to Proverbs viii. 22, where I find a description of exceeding grandeur of the gradual formation of our earth, dating its commencement from a time incalculably remote." But referring to verse 29, I find it said, "When He (the Wisdom of God) appointed the foundations of the earth." But the word "appointed" is not quite the best which might have been used. It means more accurately, "When He *ordained as a law* the foundations of the earth." Numerous passages might be quoted to show that this is the true meaning of the term. Thus in Proverbs viii. 27, "When he set a compass (more correctly rendered *ordained a circle*) upon the

face of the deep." Here we have the expression of a law, which God ordained, and also a reference to a circle on the surface of the waters, the latter a modern discovery. In Isaiah xl. 22 we have another allusion to the "circle of the earth." Let any sceptic tell us how this circular or spherical form of the earth and sea, came to be mentioned at this early period by the writers of Scripture and no one else. The reference to pillars of the earth, is no doubt a highly poetic expression, one which was not only perfectly allowable, but which might be and sometimes is appropriately used to-day. Moreover the Hebrew word *ḥayots* *Eh-*rets in hundreds of passages of Scripture simply means land, and it is literally correct to say that the land rests upon pillars. When the cooling down process took place in the interior of the earth, the outer crust became broken up, portions of it were submerged beneath the waters and other parts resting upon pillars of rocks rose above the surface of the oceans and so "dry land appeared." Thus the dry land called earth was literally laid on "foundations" and supported by "pillars." The word rendered "corners" in Isaiah xl. 12 is in Hebrew *wings*, and means, as must be obvious to any one who reads the passage carefully, the four quarters of the earth; and the passage in Revelations has a similar meaning. Besides, do we not often speak even to-day of going to "the ends of the earth," and yet no sceptic cavils at the expression?

GOD SENDING MEN STRONG DELUSIONS.

Question 59.—Will you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage in the second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, 2 chapter, 11, 12 verses, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie," &c. * * *

Answer.—God sends these delusions in the same way that He may be said to send everything else that He in His Divine wisdom permits to come to mankind. Men reject the truth, taking "pleasure in unrighteousness;" they delude themselves into the belief of a lie, and by-and-by become as incapable of seeing the Divine law as a man is of distinguishing objects placed before

him in a strong light whose eyes have been for years accustomed to darkness. Let any one voluntarily choose to dwell for the greater part of his life in physical darkness, and his organs of vision will adapt themselves to this state, by a law of God indelibly stamped upon his organization, and when the sunlight is admitted it will not only cause great pain to his eyes but it will distort the images of things seen. He is thus deceived by a delusion, which may be really said to be sent by God, for it is the result of God's law, and yet it came of his own free choice. And so those persons who are bent upon misapprehending the truth, and living in error for the reason given in the text, which must not be overlooked, that they take "pleasure in unrighteousness," will in the end become spiritually blind and see the facts relating to God and their own higher selves through a distorted medium of their own creating, and thus become deluded and believe a lie, bringing about thereby their own condemnation. Those who reject the truth, God gives up in righteous judgment to Satan's delusions; they cast off allegiance to God, settle down into believing a lie, and the awful climax is sure to come. The terms rendered "strong delusion," *ἐνέργειαν πλάνης*, mean an effectual (energizing) working of error, answering to the working of Satan, contrasted with the effectual (energizing) working in believers by the Holy Spirit. "If," says an able modern author, "we disparage Scripture, and treat it 'as any other book,' then Almighty God, who is the author of Scripture, will punish us by our own devices. He will choose our delusions; He will chastise us by our wickedness, and 'reprove us by our backslidings,' and 'give us the reward of our own hands.' Our presumption and our irreverence will be the instruments of our punishment. In the Divine government of this world sin not unfrequently carries its reward in its own bosom." The Spiritual laws are as certain in their operation as those of the material universe.

DAVID A MAN OF WAR AND YET BUT A STRIPLING.

Question 60.—Can you explain why David in 1 Samuel, xvi 18, is called "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war," and yet

in the xviith chapter Saul tells him he is "but a youth," and seems to look upon him as one altogether unskilled in war?
* * *

Answer.—It does not follow from the epithets applied to David in the first passage that he had been already engaged in war, and had displayed great prowess in battle; they may have simply referred to the amazing courage that he had shown in destroying the lion and the bear (xvii., 34-36), which marked him for a future hero. On the other hand, עַלְמָה *guh'lem*, translated "stripling," is the masculine form of עַלְמָה *gul-māh*, "virgin," and simply means a young man, who may possibly have possessed great physical power. Indeed, Forst says that the word means "properly a strong one." There is therefore no discrepancy whatever in these passages.

MORAL FREEDOM AND GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE.

Question 61.—How can a man be morally free when God foreknows all that will happen? If God knows before I am born that I shall do a certain act on a particular day, then that act is rendered certain; how, therefore, can I be free to perform it or not? * * *

Answer.—The form in which this question is put shows that the querist is labouring under a total misconception as to the relation between the knowledge that an event will take place and the cause of the event. He evidently treats these as synonymous, whereas they have nothing to do with each other. God certainly knows everything that man will do, otherwise He would not be Omniscient. And if He foreknows that a particular man will perform a certain act on any given day, it is positively certain that the act will be performed, but it is equally certain that such foreknowledge is not the cause of the act. Divine knowledge no more necessitates the act to which it is applied than human knowledge. If I see a man who has fallen from the monument, midway between the top and the ground, I know that he will fall to the bottom, but my knowledge will exercise no sort of control over his descent. That is due to quite a dif-

ferent cause. If I throw a stone into the air, I know that it will come down again ; but my knowledge does not bring it down, nor interfere in any way with the force of gravity. It is brought down by attraction. These illustrations might be indefinitely multiplied. In all cases it will be seen that the knowledge of the certainty of an act is not the cause of the act, and therefore has nothing to do in determining it. This will appear more clear when we remember that there is really no such thing as foreknowledge with God. From His point of view foreknowledge has no existence. He sees the end in the beginning and from the beginning. There is no past and no future with Him, but one Eternal Now. Every force and form and act is present to His view. As I look out into the street I see horses and carriages and many people passing to and fro. I know that they are passing, and yet they are not running on my errands, and I have had no agency whatever in causing their going. My knowledge does not interfere with their freedom in the least. So the Lord sees as present, acts which from my point of view will occur millions of years hence ; but His knowing their existence has nothing to do with causing them.

In such reasoning as that of our correspondent there is an actual reversal of the relation between the knowledge of an act, and the act itself. The knowledge is not the cause of the act, but its result. God had given us the power of walking ; if we exercise it, He knows we shall walk. He has given us the power to eat, and He creates food for us ; and He has established such relations between our physical organism and some substances, that if we eat them they will sustain us, and give us strength to do our work. There are other substances which will destroy our physical life to eat. The Lord knows that if we eat good, wholesome food, in proper quantities, we shall have good health, so far as it depends upon our food. If we eat arsenic and strychnine, He knows they will destroy our physical life. He has given us the power to choose which we will do. The result will depend upon our action and not upon His knowledge. What He knows in a given instance depends upon our action, not our action upon His knowledge. If I put my hand

in the fire I know it will burn, but my knowledge does not burn it. It is the fire that does that.

If men reasoned about natural things as some do about moral they would say, in the spring, "The Lord knows whether I shall have a crop or not. If He knows I shall have one, I certainly shall. Then what is the use of ploughing and sowing? If He knows that I shall not have a harvest, I shall not, however hard I may work. Then what is the use of working?" It is quite true that God knows whether the farmer will have a crop. He knows that he will not have one unless he breaks up his ground and casts his seed into it, and protects and cultivates it. He knows he will have one, under ordinary circumstances, if he uses the proper means. If the correspondent who asks this question has a wife, she might, if she followed his reasoning, say to him, "The Lord knows whether you will have any dinner or not, and if you have one, of what it will be composed, so I will bid you good morning, and make a call upon a neighbour." When the father tells his child to perform some service for him, he would hardly be content to be told that the Lord knew whether he would do it or not, and, therefore, there would be no use in his taking a step in the matter. The father would be likely to meet his argument as the old Greek did that of his slave, who, having been caught in the act of stealing, and being about to be whipped, pleaded in extenuation of his crime, "It was fated that I should steal." "Yes," replied his master, "I know that, and it was fated that you should be whipped." Any one who should excuse himself from not using the proper means to secure his ends, in natural things, because the Lord knows the result, would be considered unwise—to put it as mildly as possible. Our action is one of the factors which enters into every effect, spiritual as well as natural. And the Lord knows that the result will always be determined by all the means and forces which were employed to accomplish it.

Man's freedom is not touched in any sense by God's knowledge of results. He employs His infinite wisdom and power to arrange and direct all causes, in a manner to produce the

greatest attribute of human existence. Man's freedom is as much the Lord's gift as the law, and it enters into every act and every relation of life. It is the essential human quality, which distinguishes us from the lower animals. This freedom the Lord always respects, and what He does for us, or ever can do for us, depends upon our free co-operation with Him, and not in the least upon his knowledge of the result.

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HEAVEN INTERCEDE WITH THE FATHER?

Question.—I am much perplexed about the meaning of Romans viii. 26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Does not this imply that one of the persons in the Trinity is pleading with another? So it has been put to me by a sceptic, and I confess it looks like that. * * *

Answer.—The passage has no such meaning, as must be obvious to anyone who reflects upon the phraseology employed. "It simply means," says Barnes, "that the Holy Spirit greatly aids or assists; not by praying for us, but in our prayers and infirmities." The groanings are ours, not His. Says Professor Stuart: "Prayer or supplication made by the Spirit is not here intended. The Spirit 'maketh intercession,' exciting in Christians strong longings for conformity to God, deliverance from evil, and enjoyment of future blessedness as no language can adequately express." Alford, too, remarks: "No *intercession in heaven* is here spoken of, but a *pleading in us* by the indwelling Spirit, of a nature above our comprehension and utterance." This is the view taken of it by all eminent scholars, and it is most surely a common-sense view, and one in strict harmony with the phraseology in the English version. The sceptic referred to has put his own meaning into the text; he did not find it there.

THE WICKED CREATED FOR THE DAY OF EVIL.

Question 63.—Please explain Proverbs xvi. 4, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." * * *

Answer.—The real meaning of the text is, that the Lord hath ordered everything for its own end, i.e., hath ordered all things well. This, of course, includes "a day of evil" for the wicked who deserve it. The reading in the authorized version, "for Himself," is not in accordance with the Hebrew. Nor does the text imply that God created the evil man as an evil man, but that he has reserved for such an evil day in which his sins will find him out, and receive their just punishment.

OVER RIGHTEOUS AND OVER WICKED.

Question 64.—Will you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage, in Ecclesiastes vii. 16, 17: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself: Be not over much wicked; neither be thou foolish; why shouldest thou die before thy time." You will much oblige,—Yours truly, * * *

Answer.—No better explanation of this passage can be given than that of Dean Plumptre, which we give entire: "Here again we have a distinct reproduction of one of the current maxims of Greek thought. *Μηδὲν ἄγαν* (*Ne quid nimis*—Nothing in excess) of Theognis 402, and of Chilon (Diog. Laert. i. 1, 41). Even in that which is in itself good, virtue lies, as Aristotle had taught (*Eth. Nicom.* ii. 6, 7), in a mean between opposite extremes. Popular language has embodied the thought in the proverb, *Summum jus, Summa injuria*. Even in the other sense of 'righteousness,' as meaning personal integrity, personal religion, there might be in the ideal of the Pharisees and Essenes, and Stoics, the 'vain ambition' that 'o'erleaps itself;' and, 'what was true of righteousness was true also of speculative philosophy.' The wisdom that will not be content to rest in ignorance of the unknowable, is, indeed, unwisdom, and 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' (*Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*) The primary meaning of the verb in the form used here

is that of 'being amazed, stunned, astonished,' and may have been chosen to express the besotted and bedazed spiritual pride which St. Paul paints by the participle 'puffed up.' (*εὐφραίνεται*) in 1 Tim. iii. 5., and which was but too commonly the accompaniment of fancied excellence in knowledge or in conduct. *Be not over much wicked.* There seems something like a paradox in the counsel. Surely, we think, the teacher is carrying his doctrine of the mean too far when he gives a precept which by forbidding excess, seems to sanction a moderate amount of wickedness. Various attempts have been made to tone down the precept by taking 'wicked' as—not subject to rule, or—engaged in worldly affairs (the 'mammon of unrighteousness') that so often lead to wickedness. The difficulty vanishes, however, if we will but admit that the writer might have learnt the art of a playful irony from his Greek teachers. He has uttered the precept, 'Be not righteous over much.' That most men would receive as a true application of the doctrine of 'Nothing in excess,' or, in the phrase we owe to Tallyrand, 'Surtout, point de sêle.' He mentally sees, as it were, the complacent smile of those who were in no danger of that fault, and who think that the precept gives them just the license they want, and he meets the feeling it expresses by another maxim, 'Yes, my friends,' he seems to say, "but there is another 'over much' against which you need a warning, and its results are even more fatal than those of the other." In avoiding one extreme men might easily fall into the other. Why shouldest thou die before thy time? Literally, not in thy time. The form of the warning is singularly appropriate. The vices thought of and the end to which they lead are clearly those of the sensual license described in Prov. vii. Death is the issue here, as the loss of spiritual discernment was of the Pharisaic or the over-philosophizing temper described in the preceding verse. In both precepts we may trace Koheleth's personal experience. Ch. ii. traces the history of one who in his life experiments had been both "over much wise," and, it must be feared, "over much wicked."

IS GOD PARTIAL IN THE BESTOWMENT OF HIS PRIVILEGES?

Question 65.—Does it not seem somewhat hard that Saul should be rejected by God, that his "kingdom should not continue," for a comparatively slight transgression, committed under the influence of fear, while David, who was guilty of many more serious offences, was so greatly blessed? * * *

Answer.—God cannot be partial in the bestowment of His privileges in the sense that He is unjust. But it is often impossible, to our limited vision, to see why He gives in one case and withholds in another, especially when there seems no moral reason for the difference. All we can say is first, that God can have no motive to do any wrong to His creatures; and secondly, that the cases of Saul and David are only a part of the items of the problem of Providence as it works itself out before our eyes every day, but which problem will one day be solved to the perfect moral satisfaction of every one of God's creatures. Thousands of similar cases are apparent in the world to-day which relieve the cases of Saul and David from the imputation of being arbitrary.

SHOULD A MAN HATE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER?

Question 66.—In St. Luke, 14 chap., 26th verse, Jesus Christ says, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Is this a metaphor, or could Jesus really have meant it? * * *

Answer.—A reference to Matt. x. 37, will show that hate means hate by comparison. Our Lord purposely stated great principles in their boldest and even apparently most paradoxical form by which He alone has succeeded in impressing them for ever as principles on the hearts of His disciples. The law of love involves the necessity for the possible hate of hate, as Tennyson reminds us, while the old English poet Lovelace says:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved and honoured more."

Says Dr. Jones, Bishop of St. David's: "The last term in the series of things which the disciple is called to hate is his own

life,' i.e., animal life, not life in the highest sense, which could have been expressed in the original by a different word; see note on ch. xii. 20) is the key to the meaning of the whole. So far as the love of any earthly object or of any earthly person may come into competition with the love of God, nay more, so far as these things are loved because they form part of 'our own life' (the love of kindred being sometimes only selfishness in the second degree) and not 'in the Lord,' then they ought to be hated and not loved. The 'stubborn and rebellious son' under the law was to be denounced by his parents (Deut. xxi. 18, 21): our Lord 'simply spiritualizes this precept' (Godet). The more forcible expressions in this passage compared with Matt. x. 37, are best accounted for by the different circumstances; these words were spoken with special reference to the severe trials immediately impending."

CHRIST BRINGING A SWORD TO THE EARTH.

Question 67.—In Matt. x. 34, 35, Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I come not to send peace, but a sword."

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

And yet in 9th chap. Isaiah, 6th verse, Jesus Christ is described as the "Prince of Peace."

The two foregoing verses do not seem much like peaceful language. * * *

Answer.—The contrast made here is not so much between peace and war as between union and disunion. Moreover it is prophetic to what would necessarily follow from the preaching of the great truths of Christ's religion. The Gospel tends to separate the righteous from the wicked, and hence to produce disunion between them. And history shows that this has always been the result. Divisions in families occur because all are not agreed. Christ teaches that His disciples must decide for Him regardless of the effects produced in the family or the social circle. The new life changes the old relationships; for he who is in Christ

must sacrifice all for his Divine Master. It is not the wish of Christ that families should be at variance, for He is essentially the Prince of Peace, but the inevitable result of His religion would be that those who did not accept it would oppose and fight against those who did. Says an able American writer: "Think not that you can escape the trial. The throne of peace is to be established in the midst of discord and war. Love enters with its divine message, its rebuke against sin, its offers of mercy, but men turn against it, and strife and wars ensue. 'What now follows,' says Christ, down to v. 39, form 'a circle of ideas which,' as Winzenmann says, 'never came from the mind of mortal before Jesus.' It is the subliming of all the prophetic expectations concerning the kingdom of God into the transcendent and future and heavenly; in perfect correspondence with the true sense of all prophecy, which never could, however, till now be so clearly apprehended and expressed. This is a testimony which is effectually thrown in the way of all who would build up the kingdom of peace on this side. . . . But although everything in His kingdom looks forward to the beyond and the future, to the finding of life, in respect to all who shall be found worthy of Him, this heavenly kingdom does not give up the earth. Upon it, and in hot conflict, must the heirs of everlasting peace secure and prepare for their inheritance. This is an effectual answer to those timid sentimentalists and prudent conservatives, who think more of peace and present security than of righteousness and truth which, however mildly urged, awaken the anger and deadly opposition of those whose interests they would compromise, and whose lives they rebuke." (Morison.) And so Livermore as follows: "The effect of the coming of our Lord is here put, by a strong figure of speech, for the object or purpose of that coming. It certainly never was the direct aim of Jesus to send strife into families or communities. His intentions were pacific. His birth-song was 'On earth peace.' But it would be the unavoidable result of His coming and the gradual spread of His religion in the face of a sinful world, to stir up opposition, hatred, and party spirit. The Gospel would divide men into sects before it would finish its work and produce a state of union."

Severe diseases need powerful remedies. As the world was deeply corrupted, the purifying fire (Matt. iii. 11, Luke xii. 49), and the separating sword of the Spirit, must go forth to purge the earth, and cut off its abominations before there could be a reign of peace. There can be no peace until the conditions of peace are complied with. This prophecy of Jesus has been fulfilled on every page of ecclesiastical history, and is now fulfilling. *I came not to send peace but a sword, i.e., shall send a sword rather than peace.* The consequences temporarily of my advent will be as warlike, as if I had come on purpose to produce dissension. But these consequences are not chargeable to religion, but to the prejudices and passions of men. In the end, Christianity produces peace in the soul, peace in the world, peace towards God." The whole of the passage shows what the temporary effect of the teaching of Christ will be in this world. For illustration *vide* Micah vii. 6.

GOD CREATING EVIL.

Question 63.—Will you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage in Isaiah xlv. 7: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things?" * * *

Answer.—It must be remembered that the Jews had been taught monotheism, and that this great truth was the primary one upon which the whole superstructure of their religion was reared. Hence the enunciation of this doctrine sometimes took an extreme form when opposed to Persian dualism, which recognized two eternal principles, one of good and the other of evil. Ahriman, the Persian spirit of evil, survived amongst the late Jews as "the impious Armilos," and the text warns those to whom it is addressed against the belief of an Eternal Principle of evil. Moreover, the evil referred to is not moral evil or sin, but physical evil, such as would chastise and afflict the people. Even in our day we speak of calamities as evil, and these are unquestionably sent by God. We suffer often as a chastisement for our wrong doing; and such sufferings are inevitably the result of God's laws, and may therefore be truly said to be sent by

Him. There is evil in the sense of misfortune often experienced, and this comes from God as certainly as what we call our good fortune, or what the world absurdly denominates luck.

BOOKS OF JASHER AND OF THE WARS OF THE LORD.

Question 69.—What is to be understood by the book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers xxi. 14), and the book of Jasher (Joshua x. 13)? * * *

Answer.—Of the book of the Wars of the Lord nothing is known. That there was once in existence such a book is evident from the passage quoted, but more than that cannot now be learned. "It was apparently a collection of sacred odes commemorative of that triumphant progress of God's people which this chapter records. From it is taken the ensuing fragment of ancient poetry relating to the passage of the Arnon, and probably also the Song of the Well, and the Ode on the Conquest of the Kingdom of Sihon (vv. 17, 18, 27-30)"—Samuel Clarke, M.A. The book of Jasher means the "upright" or "righteous." The Septuagint has it: *Βιβλίον τοῦ εὐδοῦ*, a poetical appellation of the covenant people. This book "was probably a collection of national odes celebrating the heroes of the theocracy and their achievements, and is referred to again (2 Samuel i. 18) as containing the dirge composed by David over Saul and Jonathan." "It is cited here not so much to confirm by testimony the stupendous facts narrated in the text as to illustrate the impression produced upon the eye-witnesses of them."—(Canon Espin.) There is a long and very able note on this latter book in the *Speaker's Commentary*, which the querist will do well to consult. Neither of the books were ever considered of Divine authority.

GOD DECEIVING JEREMIAH.

Question 70.—Please explain Jeremiah xx. 7, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed." How can this be reconciled with the truthfulness of God? * * *

Answer.—The Hebrew word *נִתְּנָה* (*pat-thah*), here translated "deceived," literally means enticed. Dr. Davidson renders the

passage, "O Lord, thou hast constrained me, and I was constrained." Henderson, "Thou didst persuade me, O Jehovah, and I was persuaded." In Blayney's translation of the whole passage, it reads :—

Thou didst allure me, O Jehovah, and I was allured ;
Thou didst encourage me, and didst prevail ;
I am become a laughing-stock every day,
Ridicule hath spent its whole force upon me.

The alluring or enticing is used in a good, not an evil sense.

IS GOD CRUEL ?

Question 71.—Will you kindly tell me what I am to understand by the command in 1 Samuel xv. 3, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass !" * * *

Answer.—It must be remembered, that when the Hebrews were travelling along their weary pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan, the Amalekites hung upon their rear, laid wait for them, and butchered in cold blood all who were unable to keep up with the main body. The following is the artless language of the sacred historian : "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt ; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary ; and he feared not God (Deut. x. 17, 18)." "They did this," says Keil, "not merely for the purpose of plundering, or of disputing the possession of this district and its pasture grounds with the Israelites, but, to assail Israel as the nation of God, and, if possible, to destroy it." The Amalekites, as we gather from the narrative, were, in earlier and later times, a horde of ferocious and bloodthirsty guerillas. It seemed best to the Almighty to extirpate a race so hardened and depraved, so utterly lost to the nobler feelings of mankind. Hence, He said to Saul, "Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites." In pursuance of this object he was ordered to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling."

It is objected that this command proves God to be "cruel." If so, the fact that in numberless cases He lays tender babes, innocent little ones, by painful disease, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, hurricanes, and the like, militates equally against Him. The charge of "cruelty" lies just as heavily against the order of things in this world, by whatever name it may be designated, as it does against the acts of the Lord recorded in Scripture.

The objection on the ground of cruelty lies mainly against the destruction of the women and children. But had these been spared, there would soon have been a fresh crop of adult Amalekites, precisely like their predecessors. Or, suppose merely the children had been saved; if left to care for themselves, they must have miserably perished of starvation; if adopted and reared in Israelite families, they might, from their hereditary dispositions and proclivities to evil have proved a most undesirable and pernicious element in the nation. It was, probably, on the whole, the best thing for the world that the Amalekite race should be exterminated.

We must not forget the fact that the Israelites lived under a theocracy, and had divine guidance in matters where we have no such aid.

CHRIST'S EXECUTION, LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL.

Question 72.—I read in John xii. 7: "We have a law, and by our law, He [Christ] ought to die," whilst in John xviii. 31, it says, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." I shall be glad to know how you reconcile these passages. * *

Answer.—There is no discrepancy whatever. The first text refers to the Mosaic code; the second to the restrictions imposed by the Roman government. The meaning of the combined passages is, "By our code of laws He ought to die, but it is not lawful for us (not permitted us by the Roman government) to put any man to death." Says Alford, "From the time when Archelaus was deposed (A.D. 6 or 7), and Judea became a Roman province, it would follow by the Roman law that the Jews lost the power of life and death." From Josephus we learn, that it was not permitted the high-priest even to

assemble a Sanhedrim without the consent of the Roman procurator. *Vide Antiq.* xx. 9. 1. The two passages are therefore strictly in harmony.

A SIN UNTO DEATH.

Question 73.—Will you kindly explain the 16th and 17th verses of the 5th chapter of the 1st epistle of John, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death."

* * *

Answer.—The sin here referred to does not seem to be any particular sin, but some general sin. The reading is "There is sin," not a sin, "I say not concerning that, that he shall enquire." It seems to be the case of one who, by obstinate unbelief and utter worldliness, has passed from a state of life to spiritual, though not necessarily eternal death, the man has become an apostate and practically an atheist. He has done what in him lies to poison the roots of his soul, and so to destroy whatever of Christian life there might be there. To a man thus obstinately and wilfully sinning against light and knowledge, with his eyes wide open, it might be said that he was sinning a sin unto death, and it would be useless under the circumstances to pray or enquire for it. The absolute and eternal destiny of such a man does not come within the scope of the passage. Hammond says, "I say not that he—that is the Christian brother—shall pray for it," which may seem cautiously set. "Not that he forbids, but only doth not bid to pray for them, or did not promise good success for prayer offered for such a one. See the prohibition Jeremiah vii. 16. Lecture 18 of Maurice on the Epistles of St. John treats this subject at large.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN RESPECTING JOB.

Question 74.—Will you kindly explain that part of the 1st chapter of Job, where our Lord is represented as being in conver-

entation with the Devil; *suggesting* Job for consideration, and family and property for certain destruction, by being placed in the Devil's power.—Yours respectfully. * * *

Answer—The book of Job is a dramatic poem of marvellous beauty and force, and in the introduction we have a description of the origin and cause of what is to follow. It is not to be supposed that an actual conversation is described as taking place between the Almighty and Satan. The narrative is, no doubt, figurative and highly symbolical. Great spiritual truths are taught, and these are in no way affected by the fact that the whole thing is allegorical.

HEARING AND NOT UNDERSTANDING.

Question 75.—Will you be so good as to give me an explanation of the following passage in the 4th chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, 12th verse. "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." * * *

Answer.—The passage above referred to may be traced back to Isaiah vi. 9, 10, which Barnes translates thus: "And He said, Go, and say unto this people, Hear ye indeed but understand not, and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make gross the heart of this people, make their ears dull and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears; and understand with their hearts and be converted and be healed." St. Matthew quotes this passage from the Septuagint, and St. Mark has the same passage in his mind. The effect of Isaiah's mission to the people, would be rather to their injury than their benefit, although not intentionally so; but because of their own wilful ignorance and obstinacy; and the Prophet is describing in the language of irony what would be the result, rather than what was the Divine and merciful intention. The mercies that do not soften, harden. Men are lost by the Gospel as well as saved by it, just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the very means which were intended to soften it. The following quotation is from a strik-

ing exposition of H. Lutteroth. 'Essai d' Interpretation de Saint Matthieu,' pp. 297-299:—"It is not to be supposed that the Parables, obscure as they may have been sometimes even for the most clear-sighted, were intended to hide the truths they contained. They hid them only from those who, far from asking their Master, like the disciples, for an explanation, wilfully did all they could to disable themselves from knowing the meaning."

WHAT SORT OF CHARACTERS WILL INHABIT HEAVEN?

Question 76.—I shall be glad if you will tell me how you reconcile the two following passages: Matt. xxi. 31, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you;" 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God?" * * *

Answer.—It must be a strangely constituted mind that can see any contradiction here. Publicans and harlots as such do not enter the kingdom of heaven; but the Lord points out that their chance of salvation was greater than that of the chief priests and elders, who professed so much and practised little. In the very verse succeeding the one quoted from the epistle to the Corinthians, Paul adds, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." They had been corrupt and wicked, but were so no longer. These are they that enter the kingdom of heaven.

TO HIM THAT HATH SHALL BE GIVEN.

Question 77.—I shall be glad if you will explain the following text, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matt. xiii. 12). Is this quite just?" * * *

Answer.—Barnes says: "This is a proverbial mode of speaking. It means that a man who improves what light, grace and opportunities he has shall have them increased. From him that

improves them not, it is proper that they should be taken away." And this is the law of the universe. We see it in operation everywhere in human nature. Whether the Scriptures come from God or not, this law is a great fact which none can gainsay. Says Alford: "He who *hath*—he who not only hears with the ear but understands with the heart, has more given him.

He who *hath not*—in whom there is no spark of spiritual desire nor meetness to receive the engrafted word, has taken from him even that which he hath (*'seemeth to have,'* Luke); even the poor confused notions of heavenly doctrine which a sensual and careless life allow him are further bewildered and darkened by this simple teaching, into the depths of which he cannot penetrate so far as even to ascertain that they exist."

Juvenal furnishes a fine parallel to this text. Dryden thus renders the lines:

"Tis true poor Codrus nothing had to boast;
And yet poor Codrus all that nothing lost."

WHO APPROACHED CHRIST IN THE CASE OF THE CENTURION?

Question 78.—In Matt. viii., 5th verse, there is an account of a centurion who came to Christ asking to have his servant healed. But in Luke vii. 3, the centurion is represented not as going himself to Jesus, but as sending unto Him by the "elders of the Jews." How am I to understand this? * * *

Answer.—Many writers, including Alford and Ebrard, think that Matthew, writing in a condensed style, speaks of the centurion as *himself* doing that which he really accomplished by *proxy*. So Robinson, who quotes the old law-maxim, *Qui facit per alium, facit per se*—He who does a thing by another, does it himself. This is a general rule which obtains everywhere and in all times. Many cases in illustration of it may be found in the Scriptures. Zebadec's wife makes a certain request for her sons (Matt. xi. 20); they make it for themselves (Mark x. 35). So with regard to David; He killed Uriah (2 Samuel, xii. 9); the Ammonites killed him (2 Samuel, xi. 17). In like manner, the Levites promulgated the "blessings" and "curses" (Deut. xxvii. 14, 15); and Joshua did it (Josh. viii. 34, 35). So the

priests bought the potter's field (Matt. xxvii. 6, 7); and Judas purchased it, that is, furnished the occasion for its purchase (Acts i. 18). Nothing is more common than that figure of speech by which we attribute to the man himself any act which he has either directly or indirectly procured to be done.—(Haley). At the same time it is quite possible that the centurion first sent the elders to Jesus, and then in his great anxiety went himself afterwards.

WORSHIP OF ANGELS.

Question 79.—Kindly tell me how I am to understand the following passage. It has recently been quoted to me to prove that angels should be worshipped. "Behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. . . . And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship" (Joshua v. 13, 14). * * *

Answer.—The word שָׁחַ (shah-'ghah'), which is here rendered "worship," does not necessarily mean to pay divine honours to, but to bow before, to make obeisance. Keil says that this word "does not always mean Divine worship, but very frequently means nothing more than the deep Oriental reverence paid by a dependant to his superior or king." And Gesenius tells us that "this honour was paid not only to superiors, as to kings and princes, but also to equals." Many passages could be quoted in proof of this. The worship of angels is rank idolatry.

IS PERSECUTION JUSTIFIABLE?

Question 80.—I shall be glad to know whether the following text does not inculcate persecution for a difference of opinion: "And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there (1 Kings, xviii. 40). This looks to me amazingly like persecution!" * * *

Answer.—Most certainly the text does not inculcate persecution. It must be remembered that the Jews lived under a theocracy, and treason and rebellion against the Government

had to be punished then as now. The "prophets" of Baal were guilty of these crimes, and leniency shown to them under the circumstances would have been a sacrifice of the welfare of the nation. Keil has well said that "To infer from this act of Elijah the right to institute a bloody persecution of heretics, would not only indicate a complete oversight of the difference between heathen idolators and Christian heretics, but the same reprehensible confounding of the evangelical standpoint of the New Testament with the legal standpoint of the Old, which Christ condemned in His own disciples in Luke ix. 55, 56." Rawlinson also remarks on this text: "Elijah's act is to be justified by the express command of the law, that idolatrous Israelites were to be put to death; and by the right of a prophet under the theocracy to step in and execute the law when the king failed in his duty." The New Testament—and this is the guide of Christians—distinctly forbids persecution for difference of opinion. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy, ii. 25.) *Vide* also the passage in Luke quoted above.

WHAT WAS THE MEANING OF JACOB'S NAME?

Question 81.—I find two accounts of the origin of Jacob's name. In Genesis xxv. 26 it is ascribed to the fact that he took hold on Esau's heel, whilst in the same book (xxvii. 36) I read, "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times." Will you explain these passages for me?

Answer.—According to the first passage the name Jacob comes from עֶקֶב *gah-kehv*, to seize by the heel, and denotes, as Ewald remarks, *heel-grasper*. But the same word also signifies to supplant, *vide* Jer. ix. 4. It is, of course, to this latter sense that Esau refers. He indulges in a biting pun in using the language employed. There is a similar sarcastic pun upon Nabal's name in 1 Samuel xiv. 25.

LIMITATION OF THE POWER OF CHRIST.

Question 82.—I shall be glad if you will inform me how I am to understand the following passage if Jesus Christ be God: "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."—*Matt. xx. 23.* * * *

Answer.—The words in italics in the authorized version have no place in the original, and they serve to pervert the meaning of the passage. Grotius, Chrysostom, Barnes, and many other eminent scholars render the text, "Is not mine to give except for those for whom it is prepared of my Father." And this accords with the whole scope of the New Testament. Christ simply intimates that places in His heavenly kingdom are not to be dispensed arbitrarily, but are reserved for those for whom they are prepared, that is for the characters fitted to occupy them. Every man in the future world goes to the place prepared for him, to the state where the surroundings are in harmony with his own nature. And even God cannot alter this without destroying that which gives to the man his individuality or self-hood. A moment's reflection will show this doctrine to be as rational as it is scriptural. Hence the words quoted are no infringement of the Almighty power of the Lord.

THE TWO GENEALOGIES OF OUR LORD.

Question 83.—How am I to reconcile the two genealogies of Christ as given by St. Matthew and St. Luke? They appear to me very confusing. * * *

Answer.—Lord Arthur Hervey has written a very able book upon this question, and he, in common with many other eminent scholars, such as Alford, Ellicott, Meyer, Wordsworth, &c., think that the two genealogies are both those of Joseph; Matthew exhibiting him as the legal heir to the throne of David, thus naming the successive heirs of the kingdom from David to Jesus; whilst Luke gives Joseph's private genealogy or actual descent. But in our opinion the more rational explanation is that adopted by Auberlen, Ebrard, Greswell, Kurtz, Lange, Lightfoot, Michaelis, Neander, Robinson, Wieseler, and others, viz., that Matthew

gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke that of Mary. The following reasons in favour of this latter view are given by Haley:

(1) It seems supported by several early Christian writers—Origen, Irenæus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Justin Martyr.*

(2) It is indirectly confirmed by Jewish tradition. Lightfoot† cites from the Talmudic writers concerning the pains of hell, the statement that *Mary the daughter of Heli* was seen in the infernal regions, suffering horrid tortures.‡ This statement illustrates, not only the bitter animosity of the Jews toward the Christian religion, but also the fact that, according to received Jewish tradition, *Mary was the daughter of Heli*; hence; that it is *her* genealogy which we find in Luke.

(3) This theory shows us in what way Christ was the "Son of David." If Mary was the daughter of Heli, then Jesus was strictly a descendant of David, not only legally, through His reputed father, but actually, by direct personal descent through his mother. The latter consideration is one of the very first interest and importance.

(4) This theory affords a very simple explanation of the whole matter. Mary, since she had no brothers, was an heiress; therefore her husband, according to Jewish law, was reckoned among her father's family as his son. So that Joseph was the actual son of Jacob and the legal son of Heli. In a word Matthew sets forth Jesus' right to the theocratic crown; Luke, his natural pedigree. The latter employs Joseph's name, instead of Mary's, in accordance with the Israelite law that genealogies must be reckoned by fathers, not mothers."

The subject is too extensive to be discussed at length. We shall probably devote a small book to it hereafter.

CHRIST'S LAST DRINK ON THE CROSS.

Question 84.—In Matt. xxvii. 34, I read, "They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall; and when He had tasted thereof He would not drink;" while in Mark xv. 23, it says, "And they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh, but He

* See Kitto, ii. 92-94, 547.

† Horæ Hebraicæ on Luke iii. 23.

‡ "Suspensam per glandulas mammarum," etc.

received it not." How am I to reconcile these passages? A sceptic has recently brought them before my notice. * * *

Answer.—A comparison of Matt. xvii. 34 and 48 will show that drink was twice offered to Jesus whilst on the cross. The first time it was drugged with narcotics, to produce stupefaction. This He refused. Afterwards some fluid free from drugs was offered Him, which He accepted. (*Vide* John xix. 29-30). The word rendered in our version "vinegar" means simply cheap wine, such as was used by the lower classes. In the Revised Version the passage in Matthew is rendered, "They gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall." It was wine, therefore, not vinegar, that was given to Christ. As to the "gall" and the "myrrh," there is no difficulty whatever. The word translated "gall" stands for anything bitter, wormwood (*vide* Proverbs v. 4) poppy, myrrh, and such like. Matthew and Mark therefore are quite in harmony in their statements. There is no discrepancy whatever.

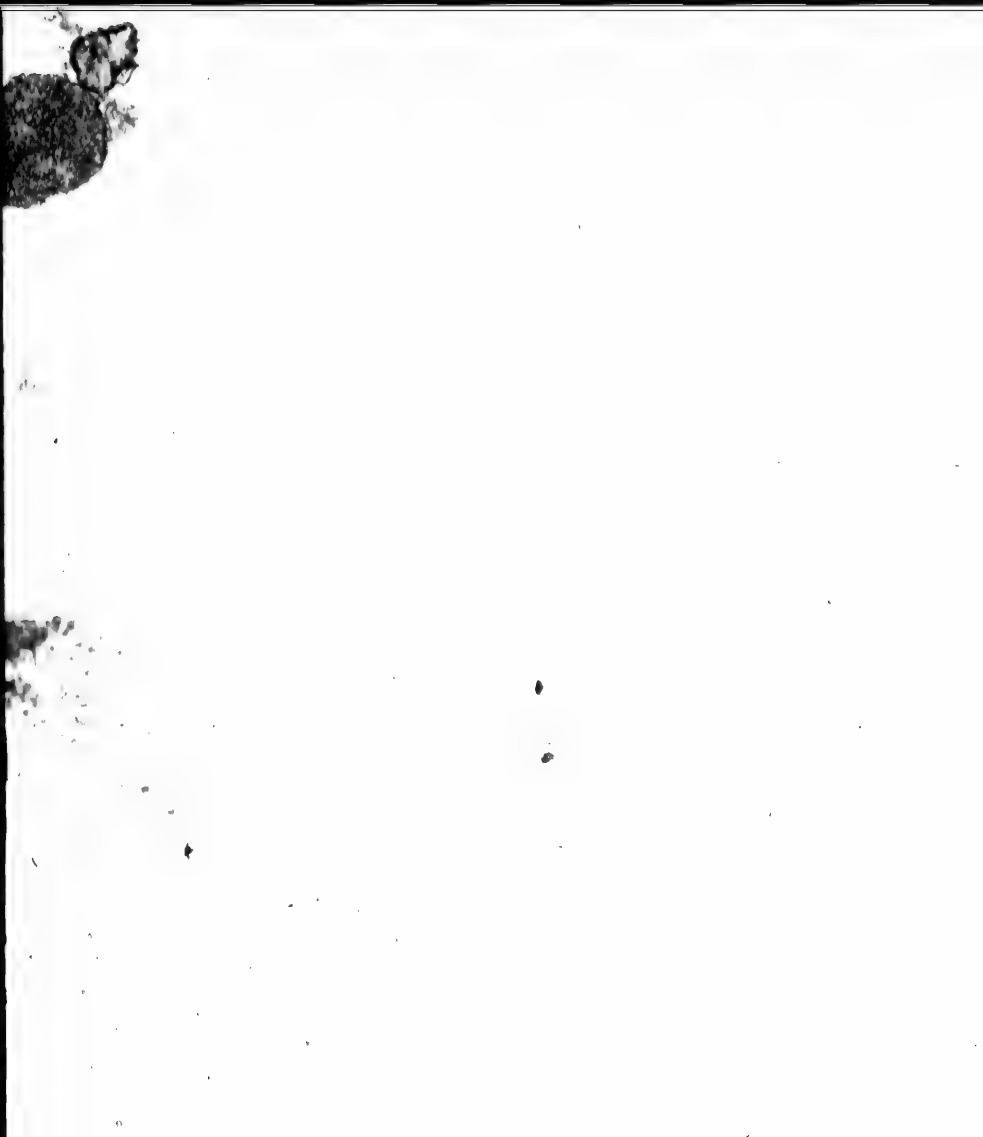
THE MIRACLE OF THE CROSSING THE JORDAN.

Question 85.—Am I to understand that in the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan mentioned in Joshua iii. 16, there was a display of supernatural power, or were there any natural causes adequate to the production of the result? * * *

Answer.—It is quite impossible for us to tell how far God may have overruled natural agencies in the production of miraculous results. It is reasonable to believe that He has often done this. But the miracle would remain notwithstanding, and the need for the supernatural as a primary cause would in no sense be lessened. Of the occurrence in question Dr. Kitto says:—"The miracle connected with the crossing of the Jordan seems to us a more signal one than the passage of the Red Sea; and it appears as if expressly framed not only to effect its own objects, but to relieve the other from all naturalistic interpretations. In connection with the Red Sea passage, we hear travellers and scholars talk learnedly about east winds, and tides, and shallows, so that whether intentionally or not, the fact as a demonstration of Divine power is explained away or attenuated.

But nothing of this is possible in the case of the passage of the Jordan. The fact must be taken as it stands. It was a miracle or it was nothing. There has not been, and there cannot be, any explanation of it on natural grounds. And if, therefore, men are obliged to admit this, it becomes scarcely worth their while to tamper with the Red Sea miracle, unless they would deny the authority of the narrative altogether. But what was the use of this miracle? as it seems that the Hebrews could have entered the land without crossing the Jordan at all; and as a little earlier, or a little later in the season, or somewhere higher up, they could have crossed the Jordan without a miracle, what need was there for this gratuitous display of that Divine power which is said to be never vainly nor idly exerted? We have not far to seek for an answer. In chap. v. 1, the reason for the miracle is shown in the result which is produced: 'And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, etc. To produce this impression was beyond question the primary object of the miracle. We can ourselves, in some measure, judge of the importance of this impression being made upon the minds of the people with whom the Israelites were about to commence a terrible warfare; but any military man will be able to tell us, with great intensity of conviction, that for the purposes of the war such an impression upon the mind of any enemy, however produced, is equal in value to a succession of victories; for it is seldom until an enemy has been repeatedly beaten that he can be brought into that state of enfeebling discouragement which this verse describes.' There may, however, have been natural agencies called specially into operation for the purpose of producing the result required. And there is no irreverence whatever in conjecturing what these were. An earthquake possibly—no one can speak positively on the question—may have elevated the bed of the river and thus damned back the waters into the Lake of Galilee, which might rise for many hours before the obstacle would be overcome. No one can say how the miracle was wrought nor what natural power God may have employed to accomplish His purpose. That there was a miracle is a clear.





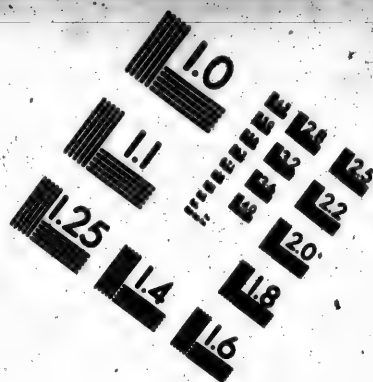
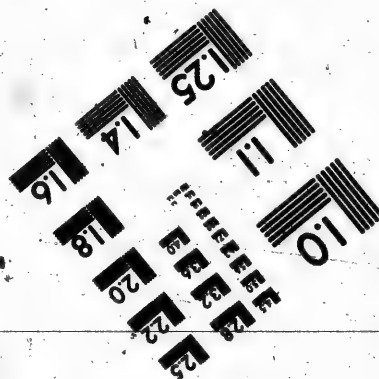
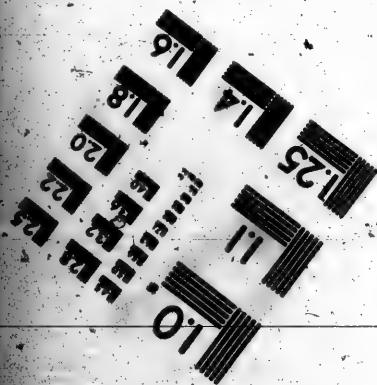
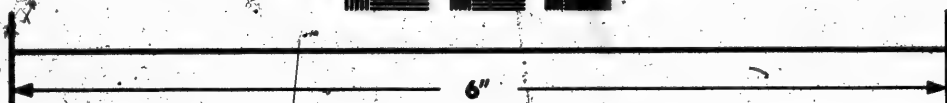
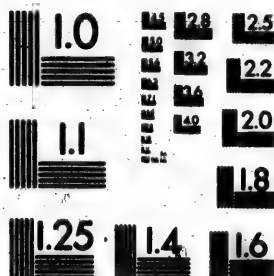


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THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

Question 86.—I am in a difficulty with regard to Matthew xii. 31 and 32. Does this really mean that repentance after the commission of this sin is an impossibility? An answer in your columns will greatly oblige your obedient servant. * * *

Answer.—All sin if repented of can and will be forgiven. But there is evidently a fearful condition of soul possible to be reached, in which there will be no repentance, and no desire for pardon. God is always both willing and desirous to let His Divine Love flow into the human soul, but by a perverse will man may sin so obstinately and so persistently that he ceases to desire pardon, and to become the recipient of Divine Love. How can forgiveness reach such a man? In Mark the corresponding text reads, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark iii. 29, Revised Version.) Our Lord does not utter here a dark and mystical saying, as many theologians have supposed—but enunciates a great spiritual fact, that salvation comes by the human will placing itself in harmony with the will of God, and that if men will not be saved they cannot be saved, i. e., if they persistently refuse to yield to the Divine Spirit when it seeks to enter their souls, then renewal or regeneration by that Spirit is impossible. No one need have any anxiety as to whether he has committed this sin, for his very concern about himself proves conclusively that he has not. When the condition of soul is reached that is here described, no desire for salvation, and no anxiety for pardon will be felt. Conscience, which is the voice of God in the soul, will then be dead, and sin will be rather glorified in than followed by remorse. The subject is too large to discuss here at length.

DEITY OF CHRIST.

Question 87.—How am I to reconcile the two following texts: "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts xx. 28) "And this is life eternal that they may know Thee, the only true God." (John xvii. 3.) * * *

Answer.—There are different readings of the passage in Acts. Many able critics render it, "the Church of the Lord," amongst them Griesbach, Lachmann, Meyer, Davidson, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Hackett. But there is no discrepancy in the two passages, whichever reading is adopted. The Deity of Christ is clearly taught on almost every page of the New Testament. As to the words "the only true God," Barnes observes: "The only God in opposition to all false gods. What is said here is in opposition to idols, not to Jesus himself, who, in 1 John v. 20, is called 'the true God and eternal life.'" And Alford: "The very juxtaposition of Jesus Christ here with the Father, and the knowledge of both being defined to be eternal life, is a proof by implication of the Godhead of the former. The knowledge of God and a creature could not be eternal life, and the juxtaposition of the two would be inconceivable."

PROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF THE BELIEVERS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS.

Question 88.—I am constantly being told by sceptics that Christians are in a minority in the world as compared with Buddhists, Mohammedans, and the followers of Confucius. Can you furnish me with the exact numbers of persons professing the various religions outside of Christianity, and also the proportionate numbers of the different Christian sects? * * *

Answer.—The tables given below will put you in possession of the information you require. They are of course only approximately correct, but they are the most accurate that can be obtained. The following shows the numbers professing the chief faiths of the world:—

Buddhists	500,000,000
Christians	350,000,000
Hindoes	160,000,000
Mohammedans	155,000,000
Confucians	80,000,000
Shintoists (Japan)	14,000,000
Jews	7,000,000
Not included in the above	157,000,000

The following shows the numerical strength of the main divisions of Christendom :—

Roman Catholics.....	152,000,000
Greek Church.....	75,000,000
Protestants.....	123,000,000

The following is an estimate of the numerical strength of the principal Protestant churches :—

Lutherans.....	35,000,000
Anglican Church.....	15,000,000
Calvinists.....	15,000,000
Methodists.....	15,000,000
Presbyterians.....	14,000,000
Baptists.....	8,500,000
Congregationalists.....	6,500,000
Universalists.....	650,000
Quakers.....	200,000
Unitarians.....	185,000
Mormons.....	180,000
Moravians.....	150,000
Swedenborgians.....	12,000

Among the 85,500,000 English-speaking races of the world, the figures stand as follows :—

Episcopalians.....	20,000,000
Methodists of all descriptions.....	15,000,000
Roman Catholics.....	14,000,000
Presbyterians of all descriptions.....	10,000,000
Baptists of all descriptions.....	8,000,000
Congregationalists.....	6,000,000
Unitarians.....	1,000,000
Other religious sects.....	1,750,000
Spiritualists, Agnostics, Atheists, and Free-thinkers in general.....	1,000,000
Of no particular religion.....	8,500,000

It remains to add that none of the above figures pretend to absolute accuracy. They are the result of the best judgment applied to the most accurate statistics attainable.

THE MEENESS OF MOSES.

Question 89.—Does it not look like egotism for Moses to write of himself, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Numbers xii. 3.

* * *

Answer.—The word עָנָה *gah-nahv*, here translated meek is rendered by Luther “harassed or annoyed,” by Dr. Adam Clarke “depressed,” by Dean Stanley “enduring, afflicted, heedless of self,” and by other scholars “disinterested.” Anyone of these translations is to be preferred to that in the authorized version. But the sentence, it will be observed, is in a parenthesis, and was probably inserted by Ezra, or some later prophet. This is the view taken by such profound scholars as Jahn, Rosenmüller, Kurtz, &c.

THE LORD SEEKING TO KILL MOSES.

Question 90.—Would you give an explanation of Exodus iv. 24, why the Lord being infinitely wise and Almighty failed to accomplish His purposes, etc.? By granting this favour you will oblige one who has taken the *Shield of Faith* since its commencement. * * *

Answer.—In our version the passage seems to read as though the Lord was desirous of killing Moses, and could not or did not succeed in doing so. This is evidently the view our correspondent takes. But no such meaning is intended. All that is implied is, that Moses having disobeyed God by postponing the circumcision of one of his sons to please his wife, is overwhelmed with mental distress, or overtaken by a sudden and dangerous calamity by which his death will be brought about. “To dishonour that sign and seal of the Covenant was criminal in any Hebrew, peculiarly so in one destined to be the leader and deliverer of the Hebrews: and he seems to have felt his sickness as a merited chastisement for the sinful omission.”—(Jamieson). Zipporah, in a state of concern for the safety of her husband, overcomes her maternal feelings of aversion to the rite, and performed the ceremony herself with a sharp stone, with which that part of the desert abounded. This done she brought the evidence to her husband, in a state of painful excitement, consequent upon the risk she had run in reference to the life of her child. Moses now recovered, but the fact would no doubt impress him powerfully all the rest of his life. God’s intention that the malady should kill Moses was like many other cases of a

similar kind, conditional. The affliction from God met him, or found him at the inn or halting-place for the night, and God purposed that unless the operation was performed Moses should die. The word "sought" is perhaps too strong an expression. *Bah-kash* might have been rendered purposed to kill him, or better still, required that he should die.

A JEWISH SON OF THE LAW.

Question 91.—Kindly tell me what is the process of making a "Son of the Law" in the Jewish religion, and whether our Lord went through the ceremony? * * *

Answer.—At the age of twelve every Jewish boy was put under a particular course of instruction, trained to attendance on public worship, and the keeping of fasts, etc., and set to learn a trade. He was then called a son of the law. For this purpose it was that Jesus was taken to Jerusalem as recorded by Luke (ii. 42). The following description of the ceremony in modern times is from an eye-witness: "A few days ago I attended a very interesting service in a Jewish synagogue. A boy just twelve years old was brought by his father to be admitted as a member of the synagogue; there were present the parents of the boy, his brothers and sisters, his friends, and some few strangers. After several ceremonies had been performed, the priest read a portion of the law in Hebrew; the boy then stepped forward to the desk or platform, near the centre of the building, and read from the roll of parchment, in a clear, distinct voice, a short psalm. A pause ensued, and then the old man addressed the boy in a few brief sentences—telling him that as he had attained to years of discretion, and knew the difference between right and wrong, a great responsibility rested on him; that it was his duty to follow the good and shun the evil; that it became him to show that the instruction he had received had not been given in vain; that he must diligently practice that which he knew to be right; be obedient to his parents, kind and affectionate to his brothers and sisters, charitable to those who needed his help, and faithful to the religion he had been instructed in. Then, placing his hand on the boy's head, he prayed earnestly that the God of Abraham, of

Isaac, and of Jacob would bless the lad, would preserve him from danger and from sin, and make him a wise and good man if he should be spared to see length of days; or if his life should be short, that he might be admitted to the presence of God in heaven." From this practice no doubt arose the Christian custom of taking the young of both sexes to the bishop for confirmation in the Episcopal Church, and among the Presbyterians in Scotland subjecting them to an examination by the minister. At the age of twelve it has always been supposed the mind becomes capable of a higher discipline both morally and intellectually than it has received before.

VERACITY OF JESUS IN BEARING WITNESS OF HIMSELF.

Question 92.—The other day a sceptic put before me the two following texts, demanding to know how they could be reconciled. "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true" (John v. 31). "Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know whence I came and whither I go" (John viii. 14). Will you kindly help me in this matter? * * *

Answer.—The second passage is supposed by Grotius to be put as a mere hypothesis as though it had read, "even though I bear witness of Myself." Bishop Pearce, Wakefield, and some others translate the first, "If I bear witness of Myself is not My witness true?" thus asking a question rather than making an affirmation. But retaining the common reading the meaning obviously is, "If I bear witness of Myself *alone*, as the Mosaic law requires at least two witnesses (vide. Deut. xix. 15), My testimony would not be true, that is, legally true or sufficient to meet the demands of the case." Says Andrew Fuller: "The one passage sets forth His testimony as it was *in itself*; the other as it was *in the account of men*. . . . Admitting their laws or rules of evidence, His testimony would not have been credible; and therefore in the verses following He appeals to that of John the Baptist, and the works which He had wrought in His Father's name, which amounted to a testimony from the Father." Alford remarks: "The assertion in chapter v. was, that His own *unsupported* witness (*supposing that possible*) would not be trustworthy,

but that His testimony *was* supported by, and in fact coincident with, that of the Father. The very same argument is used in chapter viii., *but the other side of it* presented to us. He *does* witness of Himself, *because* His testimony is the testimony of the Father who *witnesseth in Him*.

HOW COULD LAZARUS COME FORTH FROM THE TOMB WHEN HE WAS BOUND HAND AND FOOT ?

Question 93.—Is there not a difficulty in understanding how, if Lazarus was "bound hand and foot," as stated in the account given by John, he could have come forth from the grave at the command of Jesus ? * * *

Answer.—There is no difficulty whatever when we take into consideration the nature of the sepulchres in the East. These were caves excavated in rocks. No coffins were employed, the bodies being simply swathed with bandages, and placed in niches cut in the sides of the cave. In the case of Lazarus probably the corpse was not bound very tightly so as to preclude all motion, and at the word of Jesus Lazarus raised himself up from his recumbent position, put forth his feet over the edge of the niche in which he lay, and sliding down stood upright on the floor. Then Jesus bade them "loose him and let him go."

THE SONS OF GOD WHO MARRIED THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN.

Question 94.—I have been much perplexed by the passage in the Bible which says that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Gen. vi. 2). Can it possibly mean that angels from heaven married women on the earth, and if so, is not the occurrence absurd ? * * *

Answer.—The text is one which has considerably perplexed commentators, and several different opinions have been propounded as to its meaning. The notion that the "sons of God" were really angels who became enamoured of women was at one time entertained by some of the leading theological teachers. It was held, according to Josephus, in the later ages of the Jewish Church ; and it was certainly advocated by Justin Martyr,

Athenagoras, Hermias, Commodian, Methodius, Lactantius, Tatian, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Theophilus. This was unquestionably a semi-pagan view, whether the angels were, as supposed by some, celestial beings who had been appointed to guard Eden, or, as others thought, a class of fallen angels. Subsequently this wild and extremely gross theory was vehemently opposed by Chrysostom, Augustine, and others; and it disappeared and was heard of no more until recent times, when it became revived and supported by such eminent scholars as Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Kurtz, Knobel, and Delitzsch, in Germany, and some smaller theologians in England. Milton, Byron, Moore, and some other poets resorted to it in their poetry, but probably they did so simply for effect. The only argument that can be advanced in favour of this view is, that in the book of Job angels are spoken of as "sons of God," which, supposing it to be a fact, amounts to nothing, since we are here in the region of poetry. But it is by no means certain that angels are referred to in the passage in Job, dragged in to support this theory. The phrase "to present themselves before the Lord" does not necessarily imply heaven, for it is used in Joshua xxiv. 1, and 1 Sam. x. 19, of the people assembling themselves to hear the Word of the Lord. All that is probably intended, therefore, is that the Adversary found his way into the Church. In the Pentateuch angels are never called sons of God, as has been clearly shown by Keil and some other able theologians. Another interpretation of the passage which has found favour in the eyes of some modern authors is that there were races of men on the earth apart from Adam, and that the sons of these intermarried with the Adamites, the daughters of men. The word Adam is, of course, often used generically for mankind, and hence the daughters of Adam may be intended. But the word Adam is nowhere applied to a race of men, and is never found in the plural. Besides, this view never occurred to any of the ancient commentators, and the existence of the races assumed is unsupported by any evidence, to say nothing of the improbability of such races, had they existed, being designated sons of God. The most rational explanation of the passage, and the one that was adopted by Chrysostom and

Augustine in ancient times, and by Calvin, Luther, Hengstenberg, Keil, and others in modern days, is that the term "Sons of God" is used to designate the descendants of Seth, and such others as had been true to the religious light which they had, and were free from the abominations which prevailed around them. "Sons of Elohim," is a common appellation in Scripture of His professing people. *Vide* Ex. iv. 22, 23; Hosea i. 10; John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14, 19; Phil. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 2. The daughters of men will then be the women of Cainite descent, and other degenerate branches of the Adamic family. Moreover, that the Hebrew word *Adam*, with or without the article, is often used to denote a particular class, in contradistinction to men in general—men of worldly, irreligious character—will appear from the following passages: Judges xv. 7; xviii. 28; Ps. lxxiii. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 4. The meaning of the clause under notice, then, is that the professedly religious class of the antediluvians, consisting principally of Sethites, with some others—a class, who, by their principles and practice, had long kept themselves separate from the world—began gradually to relax their strictness, and to abandon their isolated position, by cultivating acquaintance and then forming alliances with "the daughters of men," of men in general; the Cainite, and other women of a similar character. That is what is referred to by Jude, when he says (verse 6), that they kept not [*τὴν ἐαυτῶν ἀρετὴν*] their primitive dignity as sons of God, and the original excellence in which they were created, but left [*τὸ ἰδίον οὐκ ἠρέψαν*] their own proper situation.—(Bloomfield.) These marriages were no doubt brought about in consequence of the great beauty of the Cainite women, and so far no objection can be urged, for the charms of women have always a powerful influence over the minds of men, and this is legitimate enough. "But the Sethites seem, in their admiration of external charms, to have paid no regard to the will of God respecting religious principle and character; and as intermarriages with unbelievers and profane women have in all ages been productive of numerous evils (Gen. xxvii. 46; xxviii. 1; Ex. xxxiv. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 14), it must be concluded that the sacred historian had such consequences in view when he took such a prominent notice of the manners which formed a

characteristic feature of the latest antediluvian age. Mixed marriages between parties of opposite principles and practice must necessarily be sources of extensive corruption. The women, irreligious themselves, would, as wives and mothers, exert an influence fatal to the existence of religion in their household, and consequently the later antediluvians sank to the lowest depravity. But the phrase 'took them wives of all which they chose,' evidently implies something very different from the simple exercise of a free choice; and it seems a conclusion perfectly warranted by the terms of this passage that the practice of polygamy had widely spread, till it became the chief cause of that universal corruption and violence which ensued."—(Jamieson). The weak and profligate women were probably taken by force to gratify the licentious passions of those now degenerate sons of *Elohim*, and hence the wide-spread iniquity which followed.

PAUL'S SCHOLARSHIP.

Question 95.—I frequently hear St. Paul spoken of from the pulpit as a great scholar. Is there any evidence that this was so? It appears to me that he never quotes the Hebrew text of the Scriptures, but always the Greek Septuagint. I shall be glad to be informed if we have any proof that he was acquainted with the Hebrew language. Also, whether his classical quotations prove his Greek scholarship? * * *

Answer.—There is certainly no evidence that St. Paul was so great a scholar as he is often represented to have been; the tendency being to overrate his learning. But we must be careful not to err on the other side. Assuredly he must have known Hebrew. On his way to Damascus the Lord addressed him in that language, or at all events, in Syro-Chaldee, which was then in use in the country. This was substantially the same as that used in the Targum of Jonathan, and of the Syriac-Peshito. Paul, too, himself, delivers at least one speech in Hebrew (*vide Acts xxi. 40*), and he declares that he had been instructed in the law (*vide Acts xiii. 2*). The latter fact would probably involve an acquaintance with Biblical Hebrew, although the former might not. The apostle makes quotations from profane writers,

which are always most apposite. He is extremely happy in these, which certainly shows an acquaintance with classical authors.

SAINTS JUDGING MEN AND ANGELS.

Question 96.—I shall be glad if you will explain to me the meaning of the following passage : "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world ? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters ? Know ye not that we shall judge angels ?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). Is not this contrary to many other passages which teach that God alone shall be the Judge of mankind ? * * *

Answer.—Only God is able to judge men truly, and therefore it is certain that He alone will be the final Judge of mankind. The passage quoted simply means that holy men, by their conduct and example, will judge, i.e., condemn, for so the word is often rendered, sinful men and angels. This interpretation is borne out by Matt. xii. 41, 42, which asserts that the Ninevites and the queen of Sheba should rise up in the judgment with that generation and "condemn" it ; that is, by their example. Says Chrysostom : "The saints shall judge the world by their exemplary judgment, because by their example the perfidiousness of the world shall be condemned." So also Archbishop Whately remarks : "Not that he meant, or was ever understood to mean, that these persons would themselves take a share in the final judgment ; but that their conduct would be a condemnation of the unbelieving generation, who rejected one greater than Jonas, and than Solomon." In another paragraph, the same writer strongly supports this explanation, and continues : "Any one who takes the right course, by so doing, condemns—in the New Testament language, 'judges'—those who, with equal opportunities, choose the wrong. This was the case with the Corinthian Christians (or saints) ; who, by embracing the Gospel, judged (in this sense), their unbelieving neighbours, to whom it had been proposed, and who rejected it." This interpretation, which is the true one, gets rid of the idea that the saints, however holy, will in any way actually participate in the act of judging their fellow-men.

BLIND MEN HEALED BY CHRIST.

Question 97.—Would you have the kindness to give in the *Shield of Faith*, an explanation of the healing of the one or two blind men, at our Lord's entrance to or departure from Jericho, as recorded in St. Matt. xx. 29-34 ; St. Mark x. 46-52 ; and St. Luke xviii. 35-43 ? * * *

Answer.—Some writers think, and with great show of reason, that there were three blind men healed (*Vide* Dr. Davidson's *Sacred Hermeneutics*), one when Jesus entered the city, and the other two when He left it. Luke says, "And it came to pass as they came nigh unto Jericho, ~~uncertain~~ blind man sat by the wayside begging. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant ; and they told him Jesus of Nazareth passeth by ; and he cried, saying : ' Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' " Matthew says, " And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him ; and behold two blind men sitting by the wayside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by they cried out, saying ' Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.' " Hence Matthew and Luke refer to two distinct and separate instances, one of which took place in going to Jericho, and the other after departing from thence. Others think that two were healed, one in the approach to Jericho, and the other in the departure from it, and that Matthew, greatly condensing the narrative, speaks of both events as if occurring during the departure from the city. Some other scholars give to the Greek verb *εγγεω*, in Luke the sense of to be nigh or near (*Vide* Liddell and Scott ; also Robinson's *New Testament Lexicon*), and take the passage as meaning that Jesus was still near the city ; Mark and Luke mentioning only the better known of the two blind men. The first explanation is the most rational.

OBSERVANCE OF DAYS AND TIMES.

Question 98.—I am a little perplexed by the following texts. In Deut. xviii. 10, I read, " There shall not be found among you an observer of the times." How is this to be reconciled with the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath and other special times ? In the New Testament Paul says, " He that regardeth the day, regardeth

it unto the Lord" (Rom. xiv. 6); and yet the practice of observing sacred times seems to be condemned in Gal. iv. 10. * * *

Answer.—The passage from the Old Testament has no reference to the Mosaic feasts. Aben Ezra and Michaëlis understand it as referring to "divination from the course of the clouds." Gesenius looks upon it as denoting "some kind of divination connected with idolatry." Fuerst says, "It is better to set out with the fundamental signification, to cover, to wrap up." The meaning would therefore be "to practice enchantment secretly or covertly." Several Jewish Rabbi's derive the Hebrew term from *gah-yin*, an eye, hence literally, to "ogle, to bewitch with the evil eye." Keil agrees with this last view. In no one case can the prohibition refer to any of the Mosaic observances. The texts from Romans and Galatians refer to entirely different classes of persons. Andrew Fuller says that the former refers to *Jewish converts*, who, having from their youth observed the Mosaic festivals as instituted by Divine authority, were permitted to continue this observance, and treated as "regarding these days unto the Lord." The latter text has respect to *Gentile converts*, who having previously done service to idols, showed some inclination to cling to their former unauthorized and superstitious observances; and hence were reproved.

SAUL'S FAMILY.

Question 99.—In 1 Chron. x. 6., I read, "So Saul died and his three sons, and all his house died together," whilst in 2 Sam. ii. 8, a son of Saul by name Ishbosheth is spoken of as living after his father's death. What is the explanation of this? * * *

Answer.—The expression "all his house," simply means all his men (*vide* 1 Sam. xxxi. 6). Keil explains it as follows: "All those who were about the king, i.e., the whole of the king's attendants who had followed him into war." Fuerst gives people, servants, etc., among the significations of the Hebrew word בֵּית

Bah'-yith which is here employed. There is nothing therefore in this text to preclude the possibility of a son of Saul who was not present on the occasion of his father's death being spared and consequently being spoken of as alive afterwards.

DEATH OF EUTYCHUS.

Question 100.—A sceptical friend drew my attention, a few days since, to the following discrepancy, respecting the death of Eutychus, mentioned in Acts. xx. In verse 9 it says he "fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead," whereas in the next verse Paul is represented as saying, "Trouble not yourselves for life is in him. Kindly tell me how I am to explain this. * * *

Answer.—You will see on reading the passage carefully, that Paul uttered the last quoted words after he had embraced the corpse, and, therefore, when the miracle had been partially performed. The case of the maiden mentioned by Luke (viii. 52, 53) is somewhat analogous; of her, although really dead, our Lord said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," that is, in relation to His power she was not irrevocably dead. By Him she could be awakened from death as easily as from natural sleep.

THE SYRO-PHœNICIAN WOMAN.

Question 101.—Mark relates an appeal made to Christ by a Syro-Phœnician woman (vii. 26) to heal her daughter. In an account of this same incident given by Matthew xv. 22, the woman is said to have been a Canaanite. How are these passages to be reconciled? * * *

Answer.—St. Matthew describes her as "a woman of Canaan," that is, one that resided in that land. Professor Rawlinson thinks that the term Canaanitish (*χαναanita*) is used in the place of St. Mark's Syro-Phœnician or Phœnician-Syrian, which is found in some copies, on the same ground that the Septuagint translate Canaan by Phœnicia (*φοινικε*). The terms Canaan and Phœnicia had succeeded one another as geographical names in the same country; and Phœnicians were called "Canaanites," just as Englishmen are called "Britons." The woman is said by Mark to have been a Greek, or rather a Gentile, as opposed to a Jew. There is clearly no discrepancy whatever between the two passages. The point in both accounts is to show that she did not belong to the Jewish people.

THE LAW OF RATALIATION.

Question 102.—I am puzzled to know how to reconcile the following passages: "And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (Ex. xxi. 23-25). "But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also." (Luke vi. 27-29). * * *

Answer.—It should surely be sufficient to remember that these texts apply to different peoples, different times, and altogether different circumstances. Christianity is for all nations and peoples, which Judaism was not. Michaelis and Jahn think that the law of Moses addresses the *perpetrator* of the wrong, admonishing him of the satisfaction he must render for the wrongs inflicted by him, whilst Christ, on the other hand, addresses the *injured* party, forbidding him as an individual, to give vent to his vindictive feelings and take the retribution into his own hands, instead of waiting for the due process of the law. Alford observes that "Our Lord does not *contradict* the Mosaic law, but *expands* and *fulfils* it, declaring to us that the necessity for it would be altogether removed in the complete state of that kingdom which He came to establish." Says Warrington: "On what principle are cases of this kind to be explained? Surely by regarding such laws as having been, when given, especially adapted to the people and the time, and for these necessary; but as being for later days and other people not necessary and unadapted, and, therefore, abrogated." The latter is no doubt the true explanation. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17).

THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL AND HIS MAKER.

Question 103.—Please explain in your "Respondent's column" the following text: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker" (Isaiah xlv. 11).—Yours in Christ. * *



Answer.—The meaning of the text seems to us clear enough. The Holy One of Israel and his Maker, i.e., Israel's Maker, Israel's Holy One and Maker. This is its plain and simple meaning.

APPEARANCES OF CHRIST AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

Question 104.—Can you give me in detailed order the various appearances of our Lord after His resurrection, with the texts which set forth the facts? * * *

Answer.—The number of these appearances we gather to be ten in all. Christlieb in his "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," gives them in the following order: "(1) Mary Magdalene sees the Lord first, on coming to the grave the second time (Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 16) after having told Peter and John that the stone is rolled away and the grave empty. (2) The other women, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, having heard the angel's joyful message, hurry back in fear and great joy, whereupon the Lord meets them (Matt. xxviii. 9, 10). (3) He also appears in the course of the same day to Peter (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5). (4) In the evening to two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 15, *et ss.*); (5) and after this to the ten apostles (without Thomas, assembled in Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 36-44; John xx. 19, *et ss.*). (6) On the Sunday following He appears to the Apostles, with Thomas (John xx. 26, *et ss.*). All these appearances took place in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, shortly after the resurrection. Then come those between Passover and Pentecost, when the pilgrims to the former feast had returned to Galilee, viz.: (7) at the Lake of Tiberias (John xxi. 1, *et ss.*) to seven disciples; (8) the great manifestation on a mountain in Galilee to all the disciples (Matt. xxviii. 16; *cf.*, Mark xvi. 15-18; Luke xxiv. 45-49); and probably at the same time to the 500 mentioned in 1 Cor. xv. 6. (9) The special appearance accorded to James the brother of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 7), when, perhaps, the disciples were exhorted to return earlier than usual to keep the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem. (10) The final appearance is that to the apostles on the Mount of Olives which concluded with the ascension (Mark xvi. 19; Luke xxiv.

50, *et ss.*; Acts i. 4-12)." The same order has been adopted by Greiner and some other eminent scholars, and it is evidently as nearly correct as any arrangement can be made from the accounts that we have in the New Testament. The various appearances, although not fully detailed in any one record, are thus brought together and harmonized. Strauss has objected to it on the ground that John mentions the appearance at the Sea of Tiberias as the third (John xxi. 14), whereas according to this arrangement it was the seventh. But this is "easily explained," says Christlieb, "by the fact that St. John is here only reckoning the appearances among assembled disciples, of which only two (the fifth and sixth) had gone before." If the whole of the accounts of our Lord's appearances are compared and collated, all the difficulties disappear.

POSITION OF THE ANCIENTS AT MEALS.

Question 105.—In Luke vii. 38, the woman who washed the Lord's feet is represented as doing this whilst standing behind Him, He, at the same time, sitting at table. How could this be? Would not His feet be in front of Him? * * *

Answer.—In the days of our Lord the custom was not to sit at table, as we understand the term, but to recline on a couch or sofa, and thus the feet of the person so reclining could be approached from behind. Different forms of tables were used; the lower end was left open for those to enter who were engaged in removing the dishes. Says a modern author: "Thus the woman who entered the Pharisee's house while Jesus was there at meat, stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and she washed His feet with her tears, etc. Now, in sitting at table, the feet would be under the table; but a person lying on a sofa in the manner described, on one side with his face towards the table, would naturally have his feet outermost, and near to any one standing behind. Thus, also, our blessed Lord washed His disciples' feet as they lay on their couches around the table. When at dinner in the vice-consul's house at Damietta, we were interested in observing a custom of the country. In the room where we were received, besides the divan on which we sat, there were seats all round the walls.

Many came in and took their place on those side seats uninvited, and yet unchallenged. They spoke to those at table on business or the news of the day, and our host spoke freely to them. . . . We afterwards saw this custom at Jerusalem. . . . We were sitting round Mr. Nicolayson's table, when first one and then another stranger opened the door and came in, taking seats by the wall. They leaned forward and spoke to those at table. This made us understand the scene in Simon's house at Bethany, where Jesus sat at supper, and also the scene in the Pharisee's house, where the woman who was a sinner came in, uninvited, and yet not forbidden. . . . In this latter case, . . . Christ is dining at the Pharisee's table. As the feast goes on the door opens, and a woman enters and takes her seat by the wall just behind Him. The Pharisee eyes her with abhorrence; but as custom permits it, he does not prevent her coming in. After a little time, as Jesus is reclining with His feet sloped towards the back of the couch, the woman bends forward, pours her tears on His feet, and anoints them with precious ointment." Viewed in the light of the customs of the country, the Scripture narrative is very clear and explicit.

HOW COULD DAVID'S SONS BE PRIESTS?

Question 106.—In several places in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Num. iii. 10; xvi. 40), it states that none but those of the house of Aaron could enter upon the priesthood. How, then, could the sons of David become priests, as stated in 2 Sam. viii. 18? The expression in the A. V. is "chief rulers," but I believe it is priests in the Hebrew. Is this so? and if so, what is the explanation?

* * *

Answer.—The Hebrew word for priest is *kōe-hāhn*, and the etymology of it is very uncertain. Gesenius refers it to the idea of prophecy, and interprets it as one who delivers a divine message, and stands as a sort of mediator between God and man. Ewald thinks it means to array, to put in order, and hence has a reference to the primary office of the priest, as arranging the sacrifice upon the altar. According to Saalschütz, the primary meaning of the word is minister, and hence the wider application that is

sometimes given to it. Bähr connects it with an Arabic root which signifies to draw near. "Of these etymologies," says Dean Plumptre, "the last has the merit of answering most closely the received usage of the word. In the precise terminology of the law it is used of one who may 'draw near' to the Divine presence (Ex. xix. 22; xxx. 20), while others remain afar off, and is applied, accordingly, for the most part, to the sons of Aaron, as those who were alone authorized to offer sacrifices. In some remarkable passages it takes a wider range. It is applied to the priests of other nations or religions, to Melchisedek (Gen. xiv. 18) Potipherah (Gen. xli. 45), Jethro (Ex. ii. 16), to those who discharged priestly functions in Israel before the appointment of Aaron and his sons (Ex. xix. 22)." (Smith's Dict. of Bible.) The passage in Samuel Dr. Plumptre seems to think a somewhat difficult one, and he suggests that "David and his sons may have been admitted, not to distinctly priestly acts, such as burning incense (Num. xvi. 40; 2 Chr. xxvi. 18), but to an honorary titular priesthood." Gesenius thinks that "the sons of David were probably priests or ecclesiastical counsellors, though they were not Levitical priests." In the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xviii. 17, it reads that "the sons of David were chief about the king;" and Fuerst, Keil, and others think that the word *kôh-hân*, in this case simply meant a servant or minister performing service. The views of Plumptre are probably the most correct.

DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

Question 107.—Does not the teaching of the following passage—and there are others of the same kind—run counter over all our ideas of love, mercy, etc., as inculcated in the New Testament: "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God" (Deut. xx. 16-18). Can such acts be harmonized with the justice and mercy of God? * * *

Answer.—No doubt there was a display of very great severity in the case in question, but the circumstances unquestionably demanded it. The abominations of which these tribes were guilty were horrible to contemplate. They practised the most loathsome vices, and their depravity was of so fearful a character that the land is represented as vomiting out her inhabitants (Lev. xviii. 25), and spewing them forth (xx. 22), as a deadly poison is disgorge by the stomach. Hence God cut them off, and used the sword of the Israelites for the purpose. Had they been left alive, covenants and marriages would have taken place among themselves and their conquerors, and the abominations of which they were guilty would have been perpetuated. It was next to impossible to live near these degraded wretches without being defiled by them. Absolute extermination was, therefore, the only safeguard. And their destruction would, moreover, tend to teach the Israelites a salutary lesson as to God's abhorrence of sin. Dr. Fairburn writes as follows: "What could be conceived so thoroughly fitted to implant in their hearts an abiding conviction of the evil of idolatry and its foul abominations—to convert their abhorrence of these into a national, permanent characteristic—as their being obliged to enter on their settled inheritance by a terrible infliction of judgment upon its former occupants for polluting it with such enormities? Thus the very foundations of their national existence raised a solemn warning against defections from the pure worship of God; and the visitation of Divine wrath against the ungodliness of men accomplished by their own hands, and interwoven with the records of their history at its most eventful period, stood as a perpetual witness against them, if they should ever turn aside to folly. Happy had it been for them if they had been as careful to remember the lesson as God was to have it suitably impressed upon their minds." In our own day milder measures would probably have answered the purpose, but circumstances have very much changed since that time. And in the discussion of any particular case we ought never to overlook the character of the age, the moral standard of the people, and the surroundings by which they are influenced. Cromwell resorted to fearfully severe measures, which he used against the

Irish insurgents, even so recently as his time, and we never tire of praising him for his courage in so doing. Thomas Carlyle—certainly not biased by Christianity—thus speaks of these more recent cruelties:—"An armed soldier, solemnly conscious to himself that he is a soldier of God, the Just—a consciousness which it well becoms all soldiers and all men to have always—armed soldier, terrible as death, relentless as doom, doing God's judgments on the enemies of God! It is a phenomenon not of joyful nature, no, but of awful—to be looked at with pious terror and awe." Says an American author: "Viewing the Israelites in this aspect, as the consciously commissioned ministers of heaven's vengeance upon an utterly corrupted and imbruted race, their case is lifted completely out of the common range of warfare, and becomes entirely unique—no longer to be judged of by the ordinary ethical standards." No less a person than the celebrated Dr. Thomas Arnold has the following emphatic defence of the Israelites, and of their warfare of extermination: "And if we are inclined to think that God dealt hardly with the people of Canaan in commanding them to be utterly destroyed, let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices, that we read continually of the whole people of God turning away from His service. But had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and still more, had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible, humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God's truth should have survived to the coming of Christ. . . . The whole earth would have been sunk in darkness; and if Messiah had come He would not have found one single ear prepared to listen to His doctrine, nor one single heart that longed in secret for the kingdom of God. But this was not to be, and therefore the nations of Canaan were to be cut off utterly. The Israelites' sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. . . . In these contests on the fate of

one of these nations of Palestine the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought, not for themselves only, but for us. Whatever were the faults of Jephthah or of Samson, never yet were any men engaged in a cause more important to the whole world's welfare. . . . Still they did God's work ; still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it."

This is the opinion of an eminent scholar, a profound thinker, and a man who was not likely to be led away by any kind of fanatical notions regarding the Bible. Nor is he alone in his views. The great German critic, Ewald, holding quite different theological opinions, and looking at matters from a very different standpoint, has said : " It is an eternal necessity that a nation, such as the great majority of the Canaanites then were, sinking deeper and deeper into a slough of discord and moral perversity, must fall before a people roused to a higher life by the newly-awakened energy of unanimous trust in Divine power." Even Dr. Davidson, usually looked upon as a Rationalist, certainly a most liberal-minded theologian, says, " In a certain sense the Spirit of God is a spirit of revenge, casting down and destroying everything opposed to the progress of man's education in the knowledge and fear of the Lord." Much more might be said in justification of these acts of the Israelites, but our limited space forbids.

WILL THE EARTH BE DESTROYED ?

Question 108.—The following texts seem to me to teach that the earth will remain for ever : " The earth which He hath established for ever " (Pa. lxxviii. 69). Who laid the foundation of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever " (Pa. civ. 5). " The earth abideth for ever " (Eccl. ii. v). If this be so, what is to be said of the following : " Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment " (Pa. cii. 25, 26). " Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but My words shall not pass away " (Luke xxi.

33). "The earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. iii. 10)—yours, etc. * * *

Answer.—That the earth, and even the system to which it belongs, will some day come to an end is tolerably certain. Science, no less than Scripture, declares this consummation to be inevitable. The law of the dissipation of energy would of itself bring it about. The sacred writers, therefore, simply enunciated a great truth when they spoke of the passing away of the heavens and the earth, as at present constituted. Following them Shakespeare wrote :

"The cloud-capped towers the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself ;
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve ;
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

The passage quoted from the Psalms, however, simply sets forth a sort of comparison between the eternal existence of God, and the dependence of all material things : "Though they should perish Thou shalt remain." Of similar meaning is that from Luke, "Though heaven and earth should pass away, My words shall not pass away ;" that is, My words are more enduring than even the earth and the heavens. The first three texts quoted by no means affirm the eternal existence of the earth, as the English reader might suppose. The Hebrew word "gôlām" rendered "for ever," by no means implies without end, but simply an indefinite period, a long time, the end of which is not disclosed. It was applied to the hills, to the Old Testament Covenant, to the Levitical priesthood, and to the Mosaic ordinances, and to many things which have already passed away. There is, therefore, no discrepancy between the passages quoted.

MAN BECOMING LIKE GOD BY SINNING.

Question 109.—I have been a good deal exercised in mind lately over Gen. iii. 22. "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us," etc. How could man become like God, or, indeed, like any celestial being, by sinning? I have been told by a clergyman that the expression is ironical, but

surely irony would not be introduced on so very solemn an occasion. * * *

Answer.—There is no irony whatever in the words spoken—indeed, the occasion is one of far too awful a character for its introduction. The rendering in the Authorized Version is far from being correct. Dr. Young translates the passage, "Behold the man was as one of us." It is the past tense, not the present, and the verb to *be* is employed, not the verb *become*. The reference, therefore, is to man's original state, whilst he remained in the image of God, not to his subsequent condition after he had fallen. He had been previously like a heavenly being as to the knowledge of good and evil, ignorant of the nature of the latter by personal contact and experience; now he has fallen, and the lustre of his moral nature has become dimmed, and his purity has passed away.

THE LAW OF GOD, FREEDOM AND BONDAGE.

Question 110.—The two following texts have been quoted to me as contradictory. Will you kindly tell me their meaning? "These are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage" (Gal. iv. 24). "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas. ii. 12). I confess I do not see much contradiction myself, but my sceptical shopmate does. * * *

Answer.—It must assuredly be clear to any one whose mind is not blinded by prejudice that there is no discrepancy whatever between these two texts. The "covenant" of the first is in no way identical with the "law" of the second. The first passage has a reference to the Mosaic law with its elaborate, complicated, and somewhat burdensome ritual, which gendered to bondage. Ellicott comments thus: "*Bearing children unto bondage,*" i.e., to pass under and to inherit the lot of bondage." Peter terms it a "yoke," which "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10). The second passage refers to the rule of life contained in the Gospel, the Lord's law of love and liberty as embodied in the Sermon on the Mount. Says Alford: "It is the law of our liberty, not as in contrast with a former law of bond-

age, but as viewed on the side of its being the law of the new life and birth, with all its spontaneous and free development of obedience." The two texts refer to entirely different matters.

LOT'S WIFE.

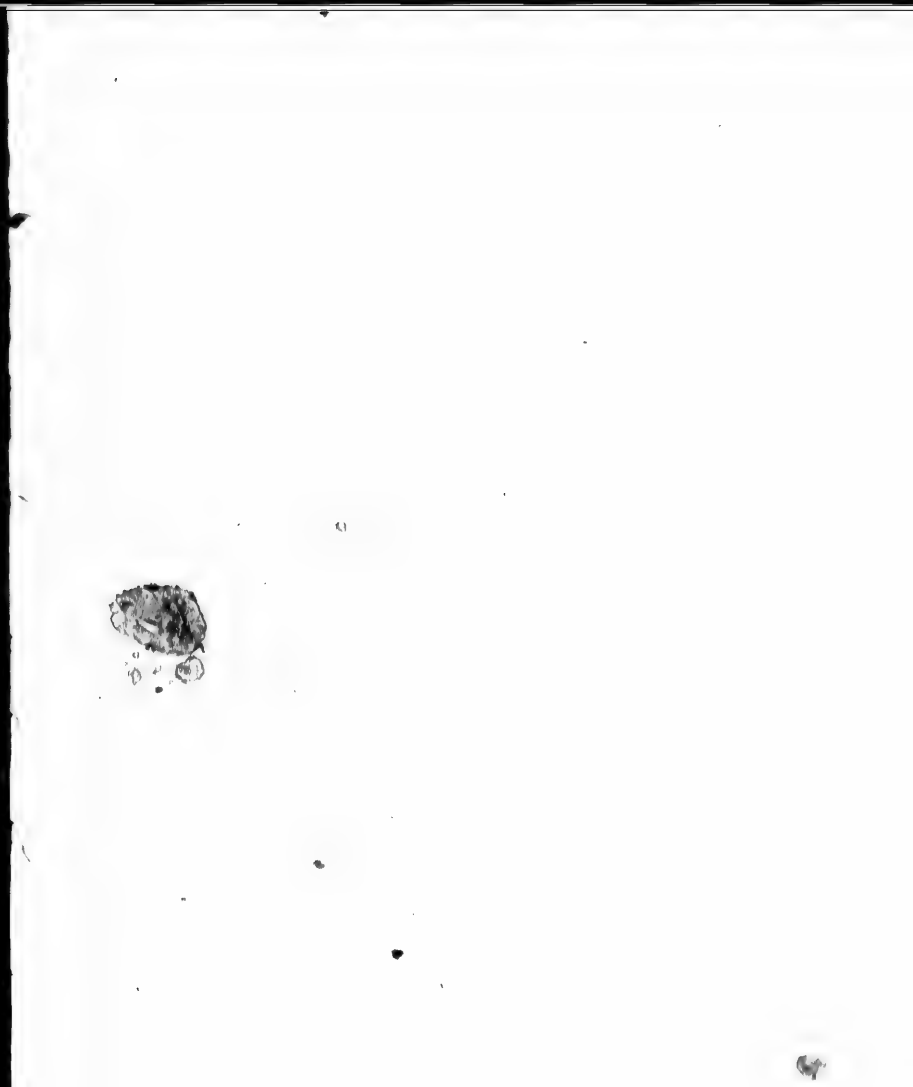
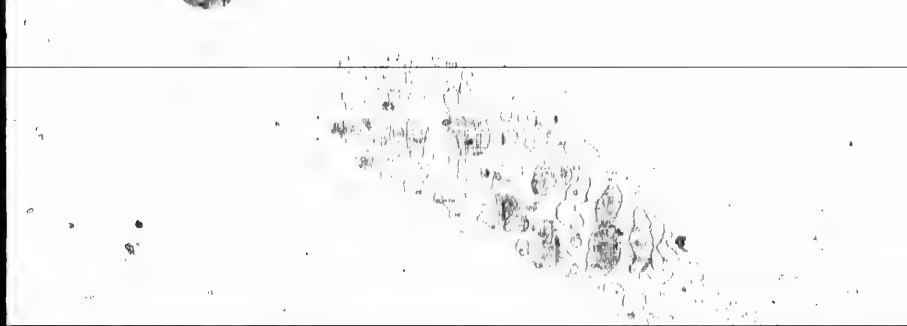
Question 111.—Do you think that Lot's wife was literally turned into a pillar of salt? The account is often made great sport of by infidels? * * *

Answer.—There can be no stronger objection urged against this miracle on a *priori* grounds than against any other. The judgment may seem somewhat severe on Lot's wife, who could hardly have been worse than her two daughters, both of whom escaped. In the Authorized Version the language is clear and explicit, "she became a pillar of salt" (Gen. xix. 26). And this view is in strict keeping with the traditions of Josephus, the Jewish synagogue, and the early Church. But yet it is very questionable whether such is the real meaning of the words in the original. The Hebrew verb employed is *Nayah*, which means "to become," never "to become," except when it has a certain proposition after it, which is absent in this passage. The true translation will, therefore, be "and she is (or shall be) a pillar of salt." Now *salt* is a term used symbolically to designate perpetuity. In Numbers xviii. 19 we read of the "covenant of salt," and the same expression occurs in reference to the throne of David in 2 Chron. xiii. 5 meaning that the kingdom would be lasting or perpetual. The word rendered pillar signifies anything set up, appointed, or constituted. It is translated *officer* in several places in Scripture (*vide* 1 Kings iv. 19; 2 Chron. viii. 10), and *garrison* in others (*vide* 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Sam. viii. 6, 14; 1 Chron. xi. 16; 2 Chron. xvii. 2). The entire passage, therefore, probably means that Lot's wife is a perpetual monument of the judgment of God against the love of the world which lingered in her heart, the longing to return to the iniquitous city even after she had left it behind. Thus we see the appropriateness of the Lord's words, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke xvii. 32), when he is enforcing the evils of procrastination.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Question 112.—I shall feel much obliged if you will tell me how I am to reconcile the following passages: "In 2 Tim. iii. 16, I read, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," etc., which seems to set forth the inspiration of every portion of the Bible. Then in 1 Cor. vii. 6, Paul says, "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment," and in ver. 12, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." Again in 2 Cor. xi. 17, we have, "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but, as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting." * * *

Answer.—The Syriac Peshito renders the first text, "Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable," etc. This reading is substantially accepted by many of the ablest Biblical scholars that have ever lived, amongst whom may be named Origen, Theodoret, Erasmus, Grotius, Luther, Cranmer, Tyndale, Hammond, Adam Clarke, Ellicot, Alford, etc. And in the Revised Version the passage is rendered, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." There is, therefore, a sufficient degree of elasticity in the text to allow the Apostle, whilst writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to occasionally introduce his own opinion, even when the views enunciated were not directly inspired. But even if the reading in the Authorized Version be adopted, which it is by men no less eminent as Biblical scholars than Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Wolf, Bengel, Calvin, Owen, De Wette, Olshausen, Oosterzee, Barnes, Conybeare, Wordsworth, Hodge, etc.; there is still no discrepancy in the texts quoted. According to Alford and Conybeare, 1 Cor. vii. 6, means "I am not now speaking by way of command; but merely expressing my permission," the permission being as much under inspiration as a commandment would have been. As to the 12th verse of the same chapter, it probably means, "But to the rest speak I," that is, I, Paul, in my capacity as an Apostle, not now from special revelation, but yet under the general supervision of the Holy Spirit. "Not the Lord," that is, not Christ by any direct command of His, since the question was one with which He did not deal in His recorded teachings. Hence here,



as in the 25th verse, "I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment." No doubt the Apostle had full liberty to express his own opinion, even where he had received no special commandment, and there is no inconsistency whatever in supposing such opinion to be in perfect harmony with the mind of God. In the 40th verse is a text which may throw some light on the subject, and Dr. Arnold, referring to this last named, deems it a token of God's "special mercy to us, that our faith in St. Paul's general declarations of divine truth might not be shaken, because in one particular point he was permitted to speak as a man, giving express notice at the time that he was doing so." "The text in 2 Cor. xi. 17," says Haley, "'I speak it not after the Lord,' probably means, 'not after the *example* of the Lord.' That is, I am constrained to an *apparent* departure from that example. In vindication of myself from the unjust aspersions of my enemies, I am compelled to speak with seeming boastfulness—as it were, 'foolishly.' This 'glorying after the flesh' was not, however, *really* contrary to our Lord's example, because it originated, not in love of boasting, but in the necessities of the case." The whole of the texts quoted may, therefore, be reconciled without the least difficulty, upon the basis of an intelligent and comprehensive theory of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. "The maxim of the whole book," says Maurice, "is that God is the educator of that people and of every people, that all the circumstances are His instruments; that all events are assertions of His presence; that whatever happens to men is a means of showing to them His righteousness, and of moulding them to His image."

WHO CARRIED CHRIST'S CROSS?

Question 113.—A sceptical friend has just drawn my attention to the following discrepancy which I shall be glad if you will explain. In John xix. 17, Christ is spoken of as bearing His own cross, whilst in Luke xxiii. 26, Simon is said to have carried it? * * *

Answer.—It is highly probable that the Lord carried the cross Himself, until His failing strength led those who had charge of Him to transfer the burden to Simon, whom Meyer considers to

have been a slave selected on account of the indignity offered in the service to be performed. Ebrard thinks that Simon did not bear the cross alone, but simply walked behind Jesus and aided Him in carrying the loathsome burden.

HOW WAS CHRIST MADE SIN ?

Question 114.—Kindly explain the following passage, which has puzzled me a little : " For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin " (2 Cor. v. 21). How was Christ made to be sin, seeing that He was " Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners " (Hebrews vii. 26), and " without sin " (iv. 15).

Answer.—The word " sin " in the first text clearly means " sin offering ; " so it is interpreted by Augustine, Ambrose, Erasmus, Lightfoot, Macnight, Whitby, and many other Biblical expositors. Schleusner, in his Lexicon to the LXX., defines the original Greek term, *ἁμαρτία*, as "*peccatum, etiam posna peccati, et sacrificium piaculare.*" Biel gives also, "*sacrificium pro peccato.*" Examples of the secondary signification are Ezek. xliii. 22 ; xlv. 29 ; xiv. 22. According to Gesenius, the corresponding Hebrew term "*gahiah-ah*," with two kindred words, means both *sin* and *sin offering*. Fuerst says "*ghat-tāhth*" denotes *sin* in 1 Sam. xx. 1 ; Psalm lix. 4 ; Job xiii. 23 ; and *sin offering* in Ex. xxix. 14 ; Lev. iv. 3. The Greek word mentioned above has clearly its secondary or Hebraistic sense in the passage in question. Chrysostom says : " Him who knew no sin, who was righteousness itself, He hath made sin ; that is, hath suffered to be condemned as a sinner, to die as a person accused." Similarly we read that Christ was " made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree " (Gal. iii. 13). Says Barnes, " Jesus was subjected to what was regarded as an accursed death. He was treated in His death as if He had been a criminal." In both these cases the apostle is speaking of the death of Christ, intimating that the Lord was put to death as a malefactor. " He gave Himself," says the same apostle, " for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world " (Gal. i. 4).

WHAT DID DAVID PAY FOR ORNAN'S THRESHING-FLOOR?

Question 115.—Please tell me how I am to reconcile the two following passages, "So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver" (2 Sam. xxiv. 24); "So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight" (1 Chron. xxi. 25). Surely these amounts are very different, yet both passages appear to refer to the same transaction? * * *

Answer.—Of course the amounts named differ greatly. But there were clearly two distinct purchases. The first was simply that of the threshing-floor, a small piece of ground, probably about 100 feet in diameter, with the oxen. For this, fifty shekels of silver—equal to about £5 10s. of our money—was paid. Then the larger purchase included the whole place, "*māk-kōhm*," the entire Hill of Moriah, on which David made preparations for building the temple. This is the first transaction mentioned in Scripture in which gold was used as a medium of exchange. Whenever it is named previously it is in the form of jewels or ornaments. Here it is employed as money, and as there were no gold coins at the time, it is estimated by weight. The amount paid was two hundred and seventy-three ounces, fifteen penny-weights.

LEPROSY.

Question 116.—Being rather puzzled with the following passages of Scripture: 2 Kings v. 1, Naaman a great man, though a leper; verse 27, Gehazi smitten with leprosy, and in chap. viii, 4, we find him in close conversation with the king of Israel. Now, my idea being that leprosy is a contagious and loathsome disease, an explanation to the above will oblige. * * *

Answer.—A great deal of obscurity rests upon this ancient disease. The probability is that more than one malady was covered by the term. No doubt the leprosy of modern Syria, and which prevails in Greece, Spain, and Norway, is the *Elephantiasis Græcorum*. "The Arabian physicians, perhaps, caused the confusion of terms, who, when they translated the Greek of Hippocrates, rendered his *elephantiasis* by 'leprosy,' there being another

disease to which they gave a name derived from the elephant, and which is now known as *Elephantiasis Arabum*, the 'Barbadoes leg,' 'Boucemia Tropica.' The *Elephantiasis Graecorum* is said to have been brought home by the Crusaders into the various countries of the western and northern Europe. Thus an article on "leprosy" in the proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, January, 1860, Vol. iii. 3, p. 164, etc., by Dr. Webster, describes what is evidently this disease." *Vide* Smith's Dict. of Bible. But this was clearly not the leprosy of the Mosaic law, for the symptoms as described in Levit. xiii. are not the same as those of *Elephantiasis*. The term "white as snow," used in one of the passages quoted, is no more applicable to *Elephantiasis* than it is to small-pox. Moreover, the fearful results of modern leprosy, such as "the transformation of the features to a leonine expression, and the corrosion of the joints, so that the fingers drop piecemeal," are wanting in the ancient disease. "It is clear," says the author of the article in Smith's Dictionary, "that the leprosy of Levit. xiii. 19 means any severe disease spreading on the surface of the body in the way described, and so shocking of aspect, or so generally suspected of infection, that public feeling called for separation. No doubt such diseases as syphilis, elephantiasis, cancer, and all others which not merely have their seat in the skin, but which invade and disorganize the underlying and deep-seated tissues, would have been classed Levitically as 'leprosy,' had they been so generally prevalent as to require notice." The separation, it must be remembered, was ceremonial; and to the ceremonial law we must appeal for the rules by which it was regulated. There may or may not have been infection; in the majority of cases, I think, we may assume there was not. Now, on turning to Leviticus xiii., it will be seen that the disease having overspread the whole surface of the body was no longer unclean (v. 13). This may seem strange to us, but as the defilement was one of ritual, the force of the disease was supposed to have exhausted itself when the body was covered. The Hebrew was reminded on all hands that he was one of God's peculiar people; his time, his food, his raiment, his hair and beard, his fields and fruit-trees, were all subject to the

ceremonial law. And his body, with the maladies to which it was subject, proved no exception. Disease itself had sacred relations arbitrarily imposed. The uncleanness of the leprosy, therefore, did not necessarily arise from the danger of contagion. Taking these facts into consideration, there is no difficulty in the case of Gehazi—whose body was quite covered with the disease—holding converse with the king. The case of Naaman is hardly to the point, as the court of Syria was not regulated by the Mosaic ritual.

CHRIST'S FIRST SERMON.

Question 117.—In Matt. v. 1, 2, Jesus is spoken of as going up into a mountain and there delivering the famous Sermon on the Mount; whilst in Luke vi. 17, 18, it says that He "stood in the plain." Were these different occasions, and if not, what is the explanation? * * *

Answer.—By some commentators it is thought that the passages refer to two different occasions. But even if they do not there is no discrepancy. Dean Stanley long ago translated Luke's words, *ἐν ἐνὸς πεδινῷ*, a level place, which rendering has now been adopted in the Revised Version of the New Testament. Dean Stanley describes a hill with flattened top "suitable for the collection of a multitude," and having also two peaks now called "the Horns of Hattin," from one of which the Lord descended and stood "upon the level place" to address the people.

ABRAHAM'S AGE.

Question 118.—I should like you to explain the following: Abraham was born 2056 B. C. (Gen. xi. 26), and he died 1822 B. C., at the age of 175 (Gen. xxv. 7), subtract 1822 from 2056 and the result is 234. * * *

Answer.—The first text does not say that Abraham was born in the year 2056 B. C., but that "Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." Of course, the three were not born in the same year. It is a general statement. Terah was the father of them all. Abram was probably the youngest of the three, born when Terah was 130 years old. He is mentioned first on account of his theocratic importance, just as Moses is usually

named before Aaron, although Aaron was the elder. It follows, then, that Abram left Haran at the age of 75 (*vide* Genesis xii. 4). This was in 1921 B.C. Now Abraham died in 1822 B.C., 99 years after he left Haran, which gives his age at death at 174, i.e., in his 175th year, as stated in the latter text quoted.

FOWLS PRODUCED FROM THE WATERS.

Question 119.—A few days ago I wrote to the Rev. F. O. Morris, of Nunburnholme Rectory, and asked him a question or two which seemed to me somewhat difficult of explanation. He has referred me to you. My first question was this: Why should the sea be commanded to bring forth fowl? (Gen. i. 20). I should have thought it would be more natural for the earth to receive such a command. Even sea and water birds do not, like the fishes, lay their eggs in the water, but on land; why should not the earth therefore receive command to bring forth birds? Indeed, in Gen. ii. 19 we are told that out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air. There is an apparent contradiction between the two passages quoted above. How do you reconcile them? Is there not an apparent inconsistency in the water being commanded to bring forth fowl that fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven? * * *

Answer.—The translation of verse 20 is unaccountably inaccurate. It should be, "Let fowl fly above the earth on the face of the firmament of heaven." In the original there is no ground for the idea that the fowls were produced from the waters, nor do any words in this text refer to the material out of which these birds were formed; the reference is to the element they were to inhabit. The waters were to bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. "Let the waters swarm with moving living creatures," would be a better rendering of the original. The Hebrew word *Shah-rats* is a generic term for all the smaller animals that inhabit the seas, of whatever kind, the larger fishes being described afterwards as *tan-neen*, or sea monsters, erroneously translated whales in the A. V. (*vide* Psa. lxxiv. 13; cxlviii. 7, etc.) Then the winged fowl were called into being to inhabit the firmament of heaven. These were formed not out of the waters, but from the ground, as stated in the next chapter.

CAN FLESH AND BLOOD INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ?

Question 120.—Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet Job says, "In my flesh shall I see God." How is this reconciled ? * * *

Answer.—Certainly flesh and blood cannot enter into the spirit world, for these belong essentially to the material sphere of existence. The passage in Job is one about which there has been much controversy, some maintaining that there is a reference in it to the resurrection of the body, which perhaps is the general view, whilst others have contended that all that is meant is that God will in the end vindicate Job before the world during his life-time here. The truth probably lies between these two views. Job looks beyond the present life into *School*, and there sees a vindication of his character, and a justification of the ways of God to men. The translation of Dr. Samuel Davidson is, in our opinion, to be preferred to any other. He renders the passage as follows :

"But I know my Vindicator lives,
And the last, He will arise over the dust :
Yea, after my skin, when this (body) is destroyed,
Even without my flesh, shall I see God :
Yea, I shall see Him for myself,
Mine eyes shall behold Him, none others (shall do so),
My reins pine within me."

Adopting this reading, it was not in the body, but out of it that Job was to have the bright vision of God, his Vindicator or Redeemer.

DID DARWIN BELIEVE IN GOD ?

Question 121.—Did Darwin believe in a God ? If so, does he say so in any of his works, and where ? * * *

Answer.—Unquestionably Dr. Darwin was a theist, and one of a very reverential tone of mind. There are hundreds of passages in his works which imply this, where it is not stated in so many words. The last paragraph in his "Origin of Species," however, is most explicit on the subject. Thus it runs : "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that

whilst this planet has gone cycling on, according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved." We have no faith in Darwin's theory, but it is only just to the memory of a great man to say that he was no atheist, and never showed any sympathy with infidelity.

GOD TEMPTING ABRAHAM.

Question 122.—Will you kindly explain the following contradiction: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man" (James i. 13); "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham" (Gen. xxii. 1), and oblige yours respectfully? * * *

Answer.—The Hebrew word *Nah-sah*, translated "tempt," in the latter text, means to try any one, to prove him, to put him to the test. So it is explained by Gesenius, one of the greatest authorities in Hebrew, and a man whose tendencies are certainly not in favour of orthodoxy. The same word is used in reference to David, when trying on Saul's armour (1 Sam. xvii. 39), and of the Queen of Sheba when testing the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings x. 1). The meaning is, therefore, that God proved the patriarch Abraham. Some of the old versions read: "God did prove Abraham." Says Bush: "God may consistently, with all His perfections, by His providence, bring His creatures into circumstances of *special probation*, not for the purpose of giving *Him* information, but in order to manifest to themselves and to others the prevailing dispositions of their hearts." God put Abraham to the proof, so that His faith and obedience might be made manifest to all generations that should come after him. In the sense that we use the word tempt, God, as St. James says, tempteth no man.

OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

Question 123.—In a discussion I remarked God was an Omnipresent person, but my opponent turned to Gen. xi. 5. I gave a reason for it, but would be glad if you would comment on it in your valuable journal to help me to give a proper answer for the hope that is within me.—Yours obediently. * * *

Answer.—The Omnipresence of God is declared in many scores of passages of Scripture, and assumed everywhere throughout the sacred volume. Nor is there anything in the text quoted opposed to that great truth. The builders of this tower had been far away from God, He was "not in all their thoughts." Now, however, He "came down" into the sphere of their consciousness in a very signal manner. It is the most striking and most beautiful peculiarity of the Bible that it uses human language and therefore becomes adapted to the human understanding. God must be spoken of as He appears to the human perceptions and as He can be conceived of by the human mind. Rabbi Schelomo strikingly observes that these texts represent God as "coming down from His throne of mercies to His throne of judgment"—as if mercy were a more serene, exalted, and glorious attribute than justice. Such expressions as "God came down," the Jewish writers term "the tongue, or language, of the event"—that is the proper interpretation of the event, the lesson it was designed to teach. In such cases God's *acts* are translated into *words*. The "language of the event" is, God comes down, interposes, to frustrate certain mad schemes of ambition. Maimonides acutely suggests that, since the word "ascend" is properly applied to the mind when it contemplates noble and elevated objects, and "descend" when it turns toward things of a low and unworthy character, it follows that when the Most High turns His thought toward *man* for any purpose, it may be said that God "descends" or "comes down." —(Haley.) In the case of Elijah, we read that God was not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but in the still small voice. Yet He was unquestionably actually present in them all. But it was only the last that He selected as His special medium of manifestation.

ABRAHAM'S DESTINATION.

Question 124.—In Heb. xi. 8, it states that Abraham when called by God "went out, not knowing whither he went." How am I to reconcile this with Gen. xii. 5, which says that he "went forth to go into the land of Canaan?" * * *

Answer.—The name of the country to which Abraham was to

go was not at first revealed to him. It was simply described as "a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1). But even had it been otherwise, and had Canaan been named as his destination, the statement would still be true that he went forth "not knowing whether he went." For it must be remembered that in those days geographical knowledge was very imperfect, and the means of intercommunication between one land and another exceedingly difficult. The name of a country several hundred miles distant would convey no definite idea of the country itself, nor of the particular part of the country referred to. Even to-day there are cases in which it would be quite correct to say of a man travelling in a foreign land that he did not know whither he was going—that is, he knew nothing of the country nor of the particular part of it which would be his place of abode, nor the special work in which he would be engaged when reaching his destination. There is surely no difficulty here.

HEALING BY PETER'S SHADOW.

Question 125.—I shall be glad if you will give an explanation of Acts v. 15. Was Peter's shadow used as an instrument for healing the sick, or producing miraculous results? By answering my query you will greatly oblige yours, etc. * * *

Answer.—Clearly the impression conveyed by the words is that the cures were effected through the agency of the shadow. It has been said by some that it was only a superstitious idea of the people that Peter's shadow possessed such miraculous virtue, and that the writer of the book does not assert that the cures were so effected. But this view is certainly not borne out by the language employed. Besides, there are other instances in Scripture history of a somewhat analogous character, as when the woman was healed by simply touching the Lord's garment (Matt. ix. 21, 22), and when cures were wrought by handkerchiefs and aprons belonging to Paul (Acts xix. 12). Lange observes on this text: "To the shadow of Peter a healing virtue is plainly ascribed for all the sick on whom it rested. But it is evident, first, that here only those are spoken of who had faith in the miraculous powers of the Apostles; secondly, it is only mentioned as the

opinion favourably disposed among the people, that even the shadow of Peter could heal ; thirdly, it is indicated by the very form of the expression, that they sought the laying on of Peter's hands, but that in case of necessity, they would be content with his shadow overshadowing them ; not to mention that there is something figurative in this expression, which points out the fact that the sick expected a cure from every contact with Peter.' (*Das Apostolische Zeitalter*). It is not to be supposed that the shadow itself possessed any powers or curative virtues, but that an aura or influence passed from the person of the Apostle reaching those upon whom his shadow fell.

BALAAH'S PROPHECY.

Question 126.—I have found some difficulty in rightly understanding the passage (Num. xxiv. 17), "I shall see *Him*, but not now: I shall behold *Him*, but not *nigh*." The advice given me by a Sunday-school teacher is that Balaam is in Hell, and he beheld Jesus in Heaven. Rev. Sir, being an anxious inquirer, I ask your help upon the passage. * * *

Answer.—The prophecy of Balaam unquestionably refers to the future glory of Israel. The correct reading of it is as follows:

"Balaam the son of Beor prophesies,
The man unclosed of eye prophesies ;
He prophesies who heard the words of God,
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Prostrate, but having his eyes open,
I see Him, but not now ;
I behold Him, but not nigh :
A star comes forth from Jacob,
A sceptre arises out of Israel,
And smites the two sides of Moab,
And destroys all the tumultuous people ;
And Edom becomes a possession,
And Seir becomes a possession—his enemies ;
For Israel achieves deeds of valour.
He who descendeth from Jacob
Shall destroy whoever escapes from the city."

Some have supposed that "star" has a reference to the meteor afterwards to be seen by the magi at the birth of Christ. It is

more likely, however, that the word was used simply as a symbol of dignity and power, and hence pointed to some illustrious ruler of Israel who was to make his appearance at a later date. The figure is very appropriate in the mouth of Balaam who came from Mesopotamia, a land where astrology was universally believed in. The pronoun "Him" probably refers to collective Israel. Balaam seems to have had the actual scene before his mental vision, for the tense indicates a present view rather than a prediction of the future. "I see Him, but not now," that is, I see the state of things portrayed, but the realization is not yet. Whether the prophecy referred to the Israelites in general, or to some special ruler in particular, the prediction is a very remarkable one, coming from such a source. In any case there was a long interval between the prophecy and its fulfilment.

PHARAOH'S MAGICIANS.

Question 127.—Would you kindly answer—*however BRIEFLY*—the following question: "Must one believe the *first* part of verse 12, Exodus vii. chapter, LITERALLY? (for how could the Egyptian magicians hope to bring life out of inanimate objects? And would God turn the heathen sorcerer's rods also to serpents when it strengthened Pharaoh's unbelief?)" * * *

Answer.—It is not at all likely that a genuine miracle was wrought by the sorcerers. Their tricks were mere feats of sleight of hand, like those performed by the conjurors of more modern times. Pharaoh doubtless had demanded a proof of the Divine mission of Moses and Aaron, and when the first miracle was performed he called in his magicians, and informed them of what had been done and requested them to do the same. The object of the king was, we may suppose, to ascertain whether a real miracle had been wrought or a mere trick performed. The sorcerers then, to show that nothing had been done which they could not imitate, threw down their rods which also became serpents. Now the conjurors of the East, and especially of Egypt have always been celebrated for their power in charming serpents. This was usually accomplished by pressing on the nape of the neck of the snake by which means the animal was thrown into a

kind of catalepsy, and then became stiff and rigid resembling a stick. These serpents they have always been in the habit of concealing about their person, and then suddenly producing them from their dress, when required. One of the principal feats of the Paylli is that of turning serpents into sticks, by making them rigid and apparently dead. Thus Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses (3 Tim. iii. 8). After the summons of the king, there was probably time for them to make the necessary preparation for performing this illusion, and thus imposing on the senses by their "enchantments." Then when Aaron's rod swallowed up the rest, the magicians were discomfited, and the king perplexed and astounded. The badge of office of the sorcerers was destroyed, and the symbol of the order gone.



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Editor of "The Shield of Faith,"

AND

CHARLES WATTS, ESQ.,

Editor of "The Secular Review,"

ON

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